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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study is concerned with exploring the transcultural experiences of ESOL students and connecting their lived experiences to literature in the classroom. The purpose of the study was to describe and explain the transcultural perspectives of six high school and community college students-- four Cuban-born and two American-born but raised in the Cuban-American culture. It investigates their lived transcultural experiences. The data was collected in the form of student interviews, a researcher's journal, and document reviews. The following exploratory questions guided this study: (1) From the perspective of four Cuban-born non-native English-speaking students (NNS), what are the essential structures of their transcultural identities? (2) What are the underlying themes that account for the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences? (3) What are the universal structures found among Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences and the Cuban-American, native English/Spanish speaking (NESS) students' experiences? (4) What are the possible structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests in relation to their transcultural experiences? (5) What are some of the connections between the structural themes inherent in the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences and their teaching literature in English as a second or other language (ESOL)? Results of the survey provide a better understanding of these students' transcultural experiences and show the potential of connecting their perspectives to literature in the classroom. (Author/KFT)

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

# TRANSCULTURAL EXPERIENCES:
# A LITERATURE BRIDGE TO ENGLISH FOR ESOL STUDENTS FROM CUBA

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
in
HIGHER EDUCATION

by

José J. Maciá

1999

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To	Dean Linda Blanton
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This dissertation, written by José Juan Macia, and entitled TRANSCULTURAL EXPERIENCES: A LITERATURE BRIDGE TO ENGLISH FOR ESOL STUDENTS FROM CUBA, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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The dissertation of José Juan Macia is approved.

Linda P. Blanton
Dean Linda Blanton
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Dean Richard L. Campbell
Division of Graduate Studies

Florida International University, 1999

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to Art Barker, for his lifetime devotion to The Seed, a place of love and hope, where miracles come true and dreams live on forever. Art, I am eternally grateful for your friendship and guidance. *You taught me to follow my heart and you gave me a life I would have never known.* Because of you, I have traveled farther than I could ever dream . . . Thank you for teaching me to believe in myself and to love others.

. . . *You* are the greatest teacher of all

I Love You

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# ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

## TRANSCULTURAL EXPERIENCES:

## A LITERATURE BRIDGE TO ENGLISH FOR ESOL STUDENTS FROM CUBA

by

José Juan Maciá

Florida International University, 1999

Miami, Florida

Professor Kingsley Banya, Mayor Professor

This qualitative study is concerned with exploring the transcultural experiences of ESOL students and connecting their lived experiences to literature in the classroom. The purpose of this study was to describe and explain the transcultural perspectives of six high school and community college students: four Cuban born students and two American born / raised students of Cuban-American culture. The participants were from Barbara Goleman Senior High School and Miami-Dade Community College. The six phenomenological portraits were explored in the form of lived experience pieces, representing the students' transcultural experiences. The data was collected in the form of student interviews, researcher's journal, and document reviews. The following exploratory questions guided this study:

1. From the perspective of four Cuban-born, non-native English-speaking students (NNS), what are the essential structures of their transcultural identities?
2. What are the underlying themes that account for the Cuban NNS students'

transcultural experiences?

3. What are the universal transcultural structures among the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences and the Cuban-American, native English / Spanish speaking (NESS) students' experiences?
4. What are the possible structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests in relation to their transcultural experiences?
5. What are some connections between the structural themes inherent in the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences and teaching literature in ESOL?

A phenomenological approach was used to investigate the participants' transcultural experiences, focused on the students' lived experiences. The study consisted of three interview sessions for each of the six participants. The analysis of the data was conducted following the principles of qualitative research, which included participant interviews, thematic analysis, researcher's journal, document reviews, and triangulation. The researcher created portraits representing students' transcultural experiences. Subsequently, the participants' transcultural experiences were used to respond to the exploratory questions, including comparing and contrasting themes and drawing connections among teaching literature in the ESOL classroom.

The results of this study show some relevant specific statements and themes that emerged from the students' transcultural data. The results serve as a better understanding of these students' transcultural experiences and the potentiality of connecting their perspectives to literature in the classroom. In addition, this study shows the need for a better understanding of the connection between transcultural experiences and literature in ESOL.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

I. INTRODUCTION ........................................ 1

1.1 Statement of the Problem ........................................ 6

1.2 Objectives of the Study ........................................ 12

1.3 Significance of the Study ........................................ 13

1.4 Delimitations of the Study ........................................ 15

1.5 Definition of Terms ........................................ 15

1.6 Organization of the Study ........................................ 18

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction ........................................ 19

2.2 ESOL Students of Hispanic Cultures ........................................ 19

2.3 ESOL: A Curriculum in Transition ........................................ 21

2.4 TESOL: Curriculum Reform ........................................ 22

2.5 TESOL: Moving From Basic Communication ........................................ 24

2.6 Literature in the ESOL Classroom ........................................ 26

2.7 Multicultural Literature: A Bridge ........................................ 27

2.8 Conceptual Model: Reader Response Theory ........................................ 29

2.9 Critical Review of the Literature ........................................ 32

III. Methodology

3.1 Introduction....................35

3.2 Rationale for a Qualitative Study....................35

3.3 Role of the Researcher....................38

3.4 Experience of the Researcher....................39

3.5 Participants: Rationale and Purposive Sampling....................42

3.6 Data Collection....................44

3.7 Research Questions....................47

3.8 Analysis and Interpretation of the Data....................48

3.9 Statement of Ethical Responsibility....................51

3.10 Summary....................52

IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction....................54

4.2 The Setting....................55

4.3 Biographical Portraits of NNS Students....................57

4.4 Biographical Portraits of NESS Students....................66

4.5 Cuban NNS Students' Transcultural Experiences....................70

4.6 Portrait of a Country....................72

4.7 Personal Memories....................77

4.8 Discovering America....................80

4.9 Living in Miami....................84

4.10 An Education in Cuba ....................90

4.11 School in the U.S.A ....................96

4.12 Family Ties ....................107

4.13 Friends Across the Ocean ....................112

4.14 Socio-political Visions ....................122

4.15 Development and Description of a Model ....................137

V. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction ....................158

5.2 Discussion: Multicultural Textbooks ....................158

5.3 Selected Literary Works: Building the Bridge ....................161

"Song of the Sky Loom" by Tewa Indian ....................161

"What is an American" by Jean de Crevecoeur ....................164

*The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*

by Olaudah Equiano ....................166

"I, Too" by Langston Hughes ....................168

"Martinez' Treasure" by Manuela Williams Crosno ....................170

"Back, But not Home" by María Muñiz ....................173

5.4 Questions for Further Study ....................176

5.5 Recommendations ....................177

REFERENCES ....................179

APPENDICES ....................184

VITA ....................194

# LIST OF CHARTS

CHART PAGE

1. Cuban NNS Students: Biographical Information ....................65

2. Cuban-American NESS Students: Biographical Information....................69

3. Central Exploratory Question ....................71

4. Exploratory Subquestion 1....................141

5. Exploratory Subquestion 2....................143

# LIST OF DIAGRAMS

DIAGRAM PAGE

Exploratory Subquestion 3

1. Portrait of A Country ............ 148

2. Personal Memories ............ 149

3. Discovering America ............ 150

4. Living in Miami ............ 151

5. An Education in Cuba ............ 152

6. School in the U.S.A ............ 153

7. Family Ties ............ 154

8. Friends Across the Ocean ............ 155

9. Socio-political Visions ............ 156

10. Model for NNS Students' Transcultural Identities ............ 157

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

As a result of the growing number of students who have immigrated to South Florida in the past ten years, a primary concern shared by administrators, educators, and other community leaders has been to design effective language programs that strive to engage non-native speaking students (NNS) in academic activities, such as the study of literature, compatible to academic skills requirements in mainstream classes. In other words, many immigrant students are not just learning English with the goal to survive in social speaking situations. More and more, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) students are learning English with a higher goal in mind--to perform linguistically at the academic level of native English speakers in mainstream English / language arts classes.

The philosophy underlying ESOL programs in Florida's public schools and community colleges is to provide opportunities for students to learn English as the foundation for academic skills in the second language. Miami-Dade Community College's (MDCC, 1992) course competencies for advanced ESOL students encompass the following goals for academic skills in reading: 1) determining main ideas from supporting details; 2) surveying, previewing, and predicting; 3) specifying explicit and implicit main idea; and, 4) scanning for specific information. In the Sunshine State Standards the benchmarks for high school, advanced ESOL students include the following academic skills in reading: 1) apply a variety of response strategies, including rereading, note taking, summarizing, outlining, writing a formal report, and relating what is read to his or her own experiences and feelings; 2) describe and evaluate personal preferences regarding fiction and nonfiction; and, 3) locate, gather, analyze, and evaluate written information for a variety of purposes, including research projects, real-world tasks, and self-improvement (Florida Department of Education, 1997).

Many ESOL students come to the U.S. and begin learning English at the secondary and community college levels to pursue vocational or academic training at the college and university levels. Consequently, in order for students to attain their professional and career goals, ESOL administrators and educators work towards designing programs that prepare students academically in their second language at the secondary and community college levels. The following are several premises highlighted in the Secondary ESOL Competency-Based-Curriculum for Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS, 1996):

- LEP students have the right to access all academic programs offered in DCPS.

- the learners will be exposed to higher interest and higher motivating experiences by raising the standards and expectations of both, the students and their teacher; thus the students' involvement in the total school program is enhanced, as is their interest in graduation.

- the scope of the curriculum, including communicative competency, literacy, and academic skills, as well as learning cooperatively in a multilingual, multicultural environment, will result in better preparing students to cope with school and community demands.

- Reading and writing in the content area will ensure an integrated curriculum providing the students the opportunity to use the second language being acquired to succeed in the academic functions.

In light of this, designing and implementing an effective literature curriculum, both in ESL and mainstream English courses, is critical to the academic success of ESOL secondary and community college students, since one of the primary goals of Florida ESOL programs includes mainstreaming NNS students. Once NNS students have been exited from ESOL programs mainstream teachers will expect them to perform at the same levels of native English speakers. In mainstream English language arts classes, for example, NNS students will be expected to read at the same levels as native English speaking (NES) students. Once students are placed in regular language arts classrooms, mainstream English teachers will expect ESOL students to perform at the same academic levels as their peers. The mainstream language arts teachers' expectations do not take into account the research that suggests ESOL students require five to seven years to reach academic proficiency at the levels of native speakers (Cummins, 1984). Cummins (1984) differentiates between 'surface fluency' and 'conceptual-linguistic knowledge' using the terms of basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). He defines BICS as the manifestation of language proficiency in everyday communicative competence, while he defines CALP in terms of the manipulation of language in decontextualized academic situations (pp. 16-17). Should mainstream English language arts teachers have a better understanding of the cognitive academic language proficiency needs of ESOL students, these teachers would be empowered to make relevant curriculum decisions to connect ESOL students to literature as another academic avenue.

The problem remains that many ESOL students are exited from ESOL programs from two to four years in secondary schools and two years in community colleges, depending on the structure of the program. This leaves a gap between the advanced levels of ESOL and mainstream English language arts in terms of ESOL students' exposure to the mainstream literature curriculum. By the time they are exited from ESOL, students have not necessarily been connected to the mainstream literature curriculum because the ESOL curriculum has not traditionally emphasized literature like the mainstream English / language arts courses. In MDCPS the secondary ESOL programs have four levels.

Beginning level students receive Level I instruction and progress through Level IV instruction, although they are placed in a parallel-to-English program by grade level:

English 1 through ESOL Strategies = 9th Grade English for ESOL students
English 2 through ESOL Strategies = 10th Grade English for ESOL students
English 3 through ESOL Strategies = 11th Grade English for ESOL students
English 4 through ESOL Strategies = 12th Grade English for ESOL students

Each subsequent grade represents an annual course and should mirror the curriculum content and materials covered in mainstream English classes. In addition, ESOL students are enrolled in an ESOL elective, grouped by proficiency levels I – IV, focusing on second language developing. In line with the philosophy that the student continue to develop his or her cognitive academic language proficiency in both languages, students receiving Levels I and II instruction are enrolled in content area courses, Bilingual Curriculum Content (BCC), that use native language instruction and English to support the transfer of cognitive academic language proficiency skills. However, ESOL Levels I and II students remain in BCC courses, and once they have passed to Level 3, they are mainstreamed in all content areas, except for English language arts. The reason for keeping ESOL 3 and 4 students in English language arts through ESOL is that these students need further development in language arts from a teacher trained in using ESOL strategies. Students are then placed in mainstream English courses, generally after Levels III or IV, after meeting the exit criteria--scoring a level 5 on the Dade County Oral Language Proficiency Survey and scoring at the 33 percentile on the reading portion of the SAT (MDCPS, 1995). Since ESOL students are mainstreamed in the content areas after two years and placed in English language arts after three or four years, it is critical that school administrators and teachers provide all ESOL students with a strong literature curriculum to fill in the gap between the last levels of ESOL and mainstream language arts programs. Enriching ESOL students' reading experiences will better support their transition to mainstream English classes and other academic areas because students will be exposed to a more demanding academic curriculum.

This is likewise the case at Miami-Dade Community College, where students who start from level one in the ESL for Academic Purposes Department, move through six levels (one semester per level). The courses span the areas of reading, writing, speech, and grammar. The first two preparatory levels provide intensive English language instruction for students who have had very little or no previous training in English. These initial levels concentrate on speaking, reading, and writing American English. The next four levels concentrate on building academic college skills essential to the ESOL students' survival in mainstream courses. Thus, for students to bridge the gap between ESOL level six and mainstream courses building academic reading skills is essential for success in college courses. An expanding research area in teaching English for speakers of other languages (TESOL) analyzes the relationship between reading and high interest literature as a way towards better understanding the reading needs of advanced ESOL students (Krashen, 1992). High interest literature means literature selected by the student, potentially providing a bridge between ESOL textbooks and mainstream literature programs. A primary concern for both ESOL and mainstream language arts teachers that impacts upon the ESOL and language arts curriculum is how to get students interested in reading. As Krashen (1992) points out, "Free voluntary reading (FVR) is one of the most powerful tools we have in language education, and, . . . FVR is the missing ingredient in first language 'language arts' as well as in intermediate second and foreign language instruction" (p. 1). The academic TESOL community is interested in techniques which move ESOL students towards the same level of academic proficiency as NESS students, and a dimension of learning "how" to teach ESOL students has been to better understand cultural experiences and these experiences' connections to language learning.

In looking for interrelations among reading, literature, and transcultural experiences, it is not enough to look at the ESOL student's background native culture (where he or she was born) without considering the cultural context within which the student is learning the new language. For the purpose of this study, I will speak of the simultaneous past, present, and future cultural context as the ESOL student's transcultural identity. In this sense, the ESOL student's transcultural identity represents the student as learner in a new community: identity, family, friends, school, work, sociopolitical views, values, and expectations. Once in the U.S., the ESOL student finds himself or herself in the process of initially adopting and continuously redefining his or her own unique transcultural identity. Often educators overlook the rich cultural dimensions that communities such as South Florida provide, where immigrant students interact with American born students of the same cultural origin. By comparing and contrasting ESOL students' cultures and NESS students' cultures, teachers can better understand the acculturation process and its relation to second language acquisition.

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The statement of the problem is organized around the following focus points:

1) ESOL students need to be able to make cultural connections with the literature they are reading, so they can transfer their reading skills to the literature in mainstream English classes.

2) High school and community college ESOL as well as mainstream teachers need more training in making connections between ESOL students' cultural experiences and teaching literature.

3) ESOL and mainstream teacher training needs to emphasize the concept of ESOL transcultural identity, which is knowledge of the ESOL student's transition as learner within the context of his or her ongoing transcultural experiences to include past,

present, and potential future experiences.

Krashen (1992) differentiated between two kinds of free voluntary reading as pedagogical approaches in moving advanced ESOL and mainstream language arts students towards mainstream academic proficiency skills: 1) sustained silent reading and 2) self-selected reading. A step towards connecting advanced ESOL students to reading high interest literature is teaching students to recognize their own transcultural experiences. Through exploring their own transcultural experiences ESOL students will be in a better position to self-select reading material. Such high-interest, personally relevant material will potentially provide ESOL students with meaningful opportunities to academic texts. MDCPS (1996) secondary ESOL Content Based Curriculum (CBC) and the MDCC (1992) Course Competencies and Learning Outcomes for ENS Reading Levels 1 – 4 do address making connections between literature and an ESOL student's background culture and personal experience. In addition, several of the competencies and objectives incorporated in the MDCPS secondary ESOL CBC under the Component "Literature" emphasize the implementation of multicultural literature in the ESOL classroom. These objectives are meant to guide teachers in teaching their students to make connections between literature and the students' native cultural experiences. For example, in one of the competencies incorporated under the Reading / Literature section of the MDCPS (1996) CBC for a secondary ESOL III level instruction is the following: Objective 6: Relates fictional and nonfiction pieces of literature to student's own experiences; Objective 14: Explores own values in light of those expressed in American literature and cites similarities and differences. However, ESOL students need to be taught how to make the connections between their transcultural experiences and the text.

In order to better meet the academic needs of ESOL students, teachers need training that considers this dimension of developing academic language proficiency.

By following the CBC an ESOL teacher may introduce a short story, novel, or poem through a pre-reading exercise that invites students to first explore their native experiences, subsequently relating their personal experiences to the class reading. Many advanced ESOL students are in the "prime" of language development; thus, such an exercise would enhance the student's literary experience and contribute to the student's reading skills in the second language. As Rosenblatt (1995) argues, "An intense response to a work (of literature) will have its root in capacities and experiences already present in the personality and mind of the reader" (p. 4). Teachers must receive special training, however, to relate the literature to student's transcultural experiences.

As ESOL and mainstream language arts teachers look for ways to better meet the academic needs of students from diverse cultures, there is a growing awareness towards implementing pedagogical approaches that consider second language development. In Miami-Dade County this is a critical issue due to the large percentage of NNS students in the school system. The Office of Educational Planning of MDCPS (1998) reports that in 1997-98 there were 48,749 students enrolled in ESOL programs in the MDCPS. The Office of Institutional Research of MDCC (1998) reports that during the Fall of 1997 there were 6,027 students college-wide enrolled in ESOL courses, in the lower levels English as a second language courses and the higher level English for non-native speakers (college track) courses.

One of the literary approaches considered in both the ESOL and English language arts curricula is introducing relevant multicultural literature as a vehicle for engaging student interest and developing reading and literary skills. The interconnectedness among relevant literature and students' cultural backgrounds encompasses the development of cognitive academic language skills for those NNS students for whom literature can serve as a bridge towards academic performance in English. The philosophy of connecting students to a culturally relevant literature experience parallels the current ESOL curricula at MDCPS and MDCC. In support of a multicultural curriculum the ESOL program at the Wolfson Campus of MDCC selects a composition text, *A Writer's Workbook* (Smoke, 1996), that includes several multicultural readings as springboard for prewriting discussions. Similarly, MDCPS has adopted a multicultural literature anthology, *Literature and Language* (Bernstein, 1994), to help ESOL students develop reading and critical thinking skills. The *Literature and Language* textbook is also used in mainstream English classes. These are the current objectives at MDCPS and MDCC; the shortcoming is teacher training in implementing literature, emphasizing an understanding of the ESOL student's transcultural experiences. Educational institutions whose philosophy include meeting the academic needs of ESOL students should implement more effective teacher training programs to connect students to literature.

The Multicultural Education, Training, and Advocacy (META) Consent Decree was approved in 1990 by the State Board of Education, requiring Florida secondary schools with NNS students to provide equitable instruction through ESOL programs to meet the special needs of ESOL students (Badia, 1994). As part of the new regulations, Florida ESOL public school teachers are required to take three semester hours in cross-cultural studies. This requirement is stated under the Personnel -- certification requirements section of the District Plan for Limited English Proficient Student: Basic

ESOL endorsement, as approved in State Board of Education Rule 6A-4.0244, requires fifteen (15) semester hours in ESOL courses which must include credit in each of the areas specified below: 1) Methods of teaching ESOL; 2) ESOL curriculum and materials development; 3) Cross-cultural communications and understanding (Badia, 1994).

The cross-cultural communications and understanding course requirement invites teachers to explore issues of students' background culture and its impact on teaching and learning. However, the focus on multicultural sensitivity, as presented in workshop packets reflects an emphasis on understanding the native culture of the student and some general aspects of acculturation. The cross-cultural training falls significantly short at a deeper understanding of the ESOL student's cross-cultural transition and its impact on the student's concept of self in relation to learning. Theories presented in such courses attempt to highlight the importance of choosing appropriate texts relevant to ESOL students' background experiences, so the context houses a meaningful interaction between student response and literary texts. However, at the training courses facilitators and teachers place little emphasis on analyzing the ESOL student's present and possible future experiences in the U.S. in relation to the student's new culture as context for his or her transformation within a new language. Instead, the facilitators focus the training on the student's past experiences in their native culture.

Despite current efforts to infuse ESOL methodology even in undergraduate teacher preparation courses, there is little concentrated effort to offer a course, undergraduate and/or graduate, to focus specifically on the connections between the ESOL student's transcultural identity and the teaching of literature in ESOL courses.

ESOL instructors implement literature at the intermediate to advanced levels of ESOL as a way of moving these students to a higher level of academic proficiency in the new language. For many ESOL teachers, the primary goal is to establish a relevant connection between literature and the student, engaging the student in the act of reading. The pedagogical goal here is to enrich the ESOL student's "cognitive academic language proficiency" skills (CALP) (Cummins, 1984) in English through literature used in mainstream English courses. Thus, the MDCPS' (1996) and MDCC's (1992) curricula incorporate pre-reading activities for students to explore literature in the student's second language. These activities include whole class discussions as well as collaborative learning groups and suggest teaching multicultural literature as a way of connecting students' cultural elements to the reading.

These current approaches in teaching multicultural literature in advanced ESOL are limited, however, because the methodology focuses on the student's past cultural experiences, while not fully making use of the transcultural experiences of the acculturation process, which will be referred to as ESOL transcultural identity. In South Florida, especially, the ESOL student's acculturation experience encompasses a transcultural interaction with American born students of the same origin. While the present curricula emphasize making connections between students' cultures and the multicultural text, there is less emphasis on comparing and contrasting the ESOL students' cultures to the cultures of American born students of the same origin, such as Vietnamese students' culture versus Vietnamese-American students' culture, Haitian students' culture versus Haitian-American students' culture, or Cuban students' culture versus Cuban-American students' culture. Such dynamic interaction between the ESOL student's vision of culture and the American born student's vision of culture can potentially contribute to a redefining of culture, a dialogical exchange where the ESOL student ultimately negotiates a new way of learning, thus potentially influencing his or her academic performance.

## 1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. to describe and explain the transcultural perspectives of four Cuban born students and two American born and/or raised students of Cuban-American culture. The students will be from Barbara Goleman Senior High School or Miami Dade Community College. Two of the high school students will be students, exited from ESOL. The other two high school students will be an American born student and a Cuban born student raised in the U.S. (both are native English speaking, of Cuban-American culture) enrolled in regular English language arts. Both community college students will be Cuban born--one will be enrolled in regular English courses and the other in advanced ESOL courses.

2. to compare and contrast four Cuban students' cultural experiences in their native countries to their experiences in the U.S.

3. to compare and contrast four Cuban students' cultural experiences to the experiences of two Cuban-American students born and/or raised in the U.S.

4. to study four Cuban students' transcultural experiences in order to make connections between transcultural identity and teaching literature in the ESOL classroom.

## 1.3 Significance of the Study

Miami-Dade County Public Schools and Miami-Dade Community College house one of the largest ESOL populations in the U.S. at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Between MDCPS (1997) and MDCC (1998) more than 54, 000 ESOL students were reported enrolled in the fall of 1997. The academic success of ESOL students is not only relevant to the ESOL students, but the school and community at large. For many of the ESOL students studying at the community college and high school levels, succeeding in school means getting and maintaining a job to support their family and contributing to the community's growth.

By providing an autobiographical model for exploring the transcultural experiences and interests of one group of students, who make-up a large percentage of Miami-Dade County's community college and public school students, teachers can use this model as a way of better understanding the transcultural experiences of diverse cultures in their own classrooms. ESOL Teachers can design autobiographical interview questions, such as the one that will be implemented in this study to analyze the rich transcultural experiences their students bring to the classroom and draw upon emerging themes that can be tied using literature in the classroom.

In light of this, the methodology employed in this study can serve as a theoretical foundation for action research in the classroom or further expanded to initiate district-wide curriculum research when considering instructional methods and textbook selection for ESOL literature based materials designed for ESOL programs. Curriculum writers can further research transcultural experiences using the portraits that will be studied here as models for better understanding cultural dimensions of teaching literature and their implications for advanced TESOL methodology. Furthermore, since the autobiographical models incorporate a comparison / contrast to American born NESS students of Cuban culture, the model can be used by teachers in different school districts that encounter the classroom as a meeting place for NNS students and American born students of diverse culture. The autobiographical models are designed to edit for the use of other cultures beyond the ESOL Cuban students, depending on the particular cultural interests in a classroom. The results of this study can also be implemented in South Florida school districts and school districts across the nation to widen the lens of transcultural understanding. Consequently, the significance of this study is that it addresses a large community of students, educators, and administrators. At a time when TESOL studies are gaining momentum in academic communities worldwide, this study contributes to the body of knowledge for cross-cultural theory and second language acquisition.

Most importantly, the results of this project are significant to the academic performance of advanced ESOL students for whom reading skills are an essential dimension of academic success in high school and community colleges. These students would benefit from their interaction with teachers whose pedagogical scope encompasses cultural elements relevant to student identity as a way of making connections between transcultural experiences and reading literature. This study is also significant for the personal and professional growth of ESOL, English, and other mainstream high school and community college educators by contributing to educational scholarship on the relationship between transcultural experiences and literature.

### 1.4 Delimitations of the Study

This dissertation focuses only on the perspectives of six students: therefore, the research is limited in its generalization to other ESOL students of Cuban culture or ESOL students of other cultures. Furthermore, it specifically concentrates on two NNS high school students and two NNS community college students. Two high school students and two community college students are recent Cuban immigrants; the other two high school students are Cuban-Americans, born / raised in Miami. The cultural experiences of these six students are not necessarily representative of Cuban culture and cannot be generalized; rather, elements of Cuban culture are part of the students' unique transcultural identity. Finally, I am Cuban born - raised in the U.S. The thematic analysis of the students' transcultural experiences is filtered through my own perspectives.

### 1.5 Definition of Terms:

For the purpose of this study, the following words and phrases have special meaning as set out below. Other terms which are not frequently used, but which require definitions, are explained as they are introduced.

***BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills)***

Cummins (1984) defines BICS as "the manifestation of language proficiency in everyday communicative contexts," and "second language surface fluency" (pp. 16-17).

***CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency)***

Cummins (1984) defines CALP as "conceptual linguistic knowledge" and "the manipulation of language in decontextualized academic situations" (pp. 16 – 17).

***transcultural experiences:***

experiences a student has as he or she interacts with new cultural dimensions, including *personal, family, peers, school, community, nationality, race, ethnicity, and language,* while encompassing the student's past, present, and potential future experiences.

***culture:***

incorporates diverse dimensions that constitute a student's identity as a whole--*personal, family, peers, school, community, nationality, race, ethnicity, and language.* A student's real world experiences.

***ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages):***

***ESOL*** is the acronym adopted by Miami-Dade County Public Schools to identify their district wide English programs for non-native English speakers.

***ESOL transcultural identity***

The ESOL student's self-concept informed by the process of cross-cultural transition. A student's concept of self in the context of his or her ongoing transcultural experiences--past, present, and potential future experiences--and it's relation to the student as learner.

***$L_1$ (First Language):***

the native language of a non-native English speaker learning English as a second language.

***$L_2$ (Second Language):***

the second language of a non-native English speaker learning English as a second language.

***LEP (Limited English Proficiency)***

A student lacking interpersonal communication or academic proficiency skills in English.

***NESS student (native English / Spanish speaking student):***

A student born or raised in the U.S., whose native languages are English and Spanish, having received academic instruction in English language arts for native speakers.

***NNS students (non-native English speaking):***

A student born in a non-English speaking country, for whom English is not his or her native language. NNS students can be enrolled in an ESOL program or have completed an ESOL program and have been mainstreamed.

***TESOL (Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages):***

The acronym adopted by Florida International University to identify the study and practice of teaching English for non-native speakers.

3p

## 1.6 Organization of the Study

The remainder of the study is divided into the following chapters, each organized by particular sub-topics relate to the dissertation topic:

**Chapter II: Literature Review:** The literature review will incorporate the most significant research related to South Florida ESOL students and programs, ESOL curriculum and instruction, TESOL studies, Reader-response theory, and multicultural literature.

**Chapter III: Methodology:** The methodology chapter will summarize the design of the study to include a description of the role of the researcher, setting, participants, data collection techniques, research questions, sample interview questions, and philosophical approaches for analyzing the data.

**Chapter IV: Results and Analysis:** The result and analysis chapter will present the participants' transcultural experiences interviews, organized within a philosophical framework, around major themes emerging from the participants' perspectives.

**Chapter V: Discussion and Recommendations:** The discussion and recommendations section will make connections between the students' transcultural experiences and relevant issues related to teaching literature in ESOL. In addition, this chapter will propose a literature unit for implementing transcultural experiences as autobiographical connections to the literature. The chapter will also include recommendations for further research and practice.

# CHAPTER TWO

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

The review of the literature presented in this section will focus on the following areas:

- the role of students of Hispanic cultures in South Florida's schools.
- ESOL curriculum
- ESOL academic language proficiency
- literature in the ESOL classroom
- multicultural literature
- reader response theory
- conceptual framework of the study

### 2.2 ESOL Students of Hispanic Cultures: A Community of Learners

In a report prepared by ASPIRA Association: Institute for Policy Research (1989) Hispanic students' education was studied in ten urban U.S. urban communities. In Miami-Dade county, during the 1987-88 school year, 254, 235 were enrolled in MDCPS, 33% of these students were of Spanish-speaking background. Enrollment in ESOL programs increased by 26%. According to a publication by the Cuban American Policy Center, the U.S. of the 1990's reflects a dramatic shift in demographics. The future of the U.S. is shaped by a change in migration patterns from European to Asian and Latin

American immigrants. This shift has an intense effect on the cultural make up of American educational institutions. Minorities now represent the majority of students in cities such as New York and Chicago. In California 51% of all students are ethnic minorities (Diaz, 1990). The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA) served 249, 000 LEP students in 1989 (as cited in Diaz, 1990, p.7). The Cuban American Policy Center estimates an approximate 1.7 million LEP students in the U.S. (Diaz, 1990). The ERIC Clearing House on Urban Education highlights that students of Hispanic culture numbered four million in 1989, or ten percent of all those in the country (as cited in Diaz, 1990, p. 8).

Badia's (1994) research situates the academic progress of Hispanic-American students and LEP students in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Her study provides an overview of Florida's ESOL programs and assesses the effectiveness of Florida's educational system by evaluating the academic performance of the state's ESOL public school students. Badia focuses on the achievement levels of Hispanic mainstream students and LEP students. Her research highlights that minority students in Florida represent 40% of the state's nearly two million public school students. In Miami-Dade County 85 % percent of students are members of a minority group. Moreover, Florida faces the challenges of providing second language skills to an increasing number of students as they arrive (Badia, 1990).

In California, LEP students were found to be at a greater retention risk than NESS students. (Diaz, 1990). Such challenges invite educators to revisit the present state of ESOL programs in Florida public schools, primarily in South Florida with its large number of ESOL programs. Badia's study (1990) emphasizes the importance of further research exploring the needs of ESOL programs and instruction.

Badia (1994) argues that although the numbers support further concentrated effort toward improving ESOL programs, the direction of Florida's public schools are not meeting the needs of most Hispanic and LEP students. The numbers show that during the 1992-93 school year out of nearly two million Florida students, 201, 758 were classified as LEP students, and of these 131, 715 were enrolled in ESOL programs. Moreover, almost three fourths of Florida's ESOL students are of Hispanic culture. Badia cites a survey by the Florida Department of Education, in which 350 randomly selected teachers were asked questions covering nine general areas. A large majority of the teachers responded that they needed adequate textbooks for teaching Florida's culturally diverse populations, in particular the teachers felt they needed more multicultural materials in school libraries and media centers. Badia further proposes that there should be a Center for Multicultural Educational Research at one of Florida's state universities. Researchers at the center would conduct research dealing with multicultural education topics and oversee and contribute to the development of curriculum materials.

## 2. 3 **ESOL: A Curriculum in Transition**

The MDCC (1992) and MDCPS (1996) ESOL curricula have changed in the past two decades. These curriculum modifications can be attributed, in part, to growing research in the area of TESOL curriculum in order to meet the needs of ESOL students at both the secondary and community college levels. The modifications continue to be essential for students to receive appropriate instruction leading to academic performance and not just speaking and listening survival skills

A significant shift in the ESOL curriculum of Miami-Dade County Public Schools took place after The Multicultural Education, Training, and Advocacy (META) team initiated a class action complaint against the Florida State Board of Education and Department of Education because many of the State's LEP students were performing academically low against national norms. To end the litigation the META Consent Decree was approved in 1990 by the State Board of Education, requiring Florida schools with NNS students to provide equitable instruction through ESOL programs to meet the special needs of ESOL students (Badia, 1994).

The implementation of the META Consent Decree was a catalyst from a politics that did not consider the cultural world-views of ESOL students, to a policy that invited educators to address the special learning needs of ESOL students. Indeed, teachers need to consider the unique transcultural experiences of ESOL students in the context of teaching English to speakers of other languages. The more that educators have an understanding of ESOL issues, ESOL students can continue to receive equal access to academic opportunities as mainstream students.

## 2.4 TESOL Curriculum Reform

Banya (1993) sees educational reform as moving towards intercultural education. As part of intercultural education, schools have an obligation to teach about the cultures of immigrant groups who have come to participate in the economy of a nation. In addition, schools should permit each group to maintain cultural elements such as language.

The teaching of multicultural literature identifies with another cultural element of the immigrant student. Curriculum reform is essential in the ESOL curriculum to incorporate the use of multicultural literature, and this revision must reflect improving the availability of adequate textbooks for ESOL classrooms. Greenberg from the Miami-Dade County Parent Teacher Association believes that there are serious deficiencies in textbook selections in addressing cultural dimensions. According to Greenberg, the debate on curriculum and teaching reform must include views from outside the traditional educational circles (as cited in Diaz, 1990).

In "The Politics of Official Knowledge: Does a National Curriculum Make Sense?" Apple (1993) argues that the curriculum is a particular group's vision of legitimate knowledge. The curriculum is a product of the cultural, political, and economic conflicts. The curriculum makes a statement about who has power in a society because it represents legitimizing some groups' knowledge as official knowledge, while other groups' knowledge remains in the dark. There is always what Apple identifies as, "a *politics* of official knowledge" (p. 222). According to Apple (1993), what counts as knowledge is integral to how dominance and subordination are reproduced in our society.

Apple (1993) believes that at risk is denying students of public education a curriculum that incorporates the cultural voices of large segments of American population. He argues that behind curriculum decisions promoting "a national curriculum and national testing is an ideological attack that is very dangerous. Its effects will be truly damaging to those who already have the most to lose in this society" (p. 223).

## 2.5 TESOL: Moving From Basic Communication to Academic Skills

Currently, research related to TESOL curriculum and instruction focuses on both language acquisition and the development of academic skills in the second language. Contemporary theorists have made connections between second language theory and academic skills as they relate to ESOL instruction (Cummins, 1979; Krashen, 1992). As Benz (1996) highlights in her qualitative study of eleven ESOL community college students, despite that the students' first language education, for the most part, what helped these eleven students cope to the demands of their regular (mainstream) classes. However, despite their first language academic foundation, the ESOL students she interviewed were in need of second language academic skills:

> The one skill area that seemed universally deficient in their first language education was higher level cognitive skills. In their first language cognition was, for a large part, memorization. This contrasted with the fact that Gordon rule classes required many higher level cognitive skills suggest that this is an area that ESOL instructors need help NNS students with.

Cummins (1979) introduces a distinction between second language 'surface fluency' and 'conceptual linguistic knowledge' and formalizes these two distinctions in terms of basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive / academic language proficiency (CALP). Cummins defines BICS as 'the manifestation of language proficiency in everyday communicative contexts,' and he defines CALP as "the manipulation of language in decontextualized academic situations" (p. 382).

Cummins (1984) further advances that 'language proficiency' can be conceptualized along two intersecting continuums. The horizontal and vertical continuums represent the relationship between the range of contextual support and the degree of cognitive involvement in communicative activities. First, the horizontal continuum represents the range of contextual support for negotiating meaning. The extremes of the horizontal continuum are labeled as 'context-embedded' and 'context reduced' communication. In context-embedded communication (horizontal left-end) students actively negotiate meaning; language transfer is supported by meaningful situational cues. Context-embedded communication is more accessible in the everyday world outside the classroom. Context-reduced communication (horizontal right-end) relies mainly on linguistic cues to meaning, the academic demands of classroom activities, such as negotiating meaning with texts. The vertical continuum represents 'cognitively undemanding' and 'cognitively demanding' communicative activities. Cognitively undemanding activities (vertical upper-end) consist of tasks that require little active cognitive involvement for appropriate linguistic performance. Cognitively demanding activities (vertical lower-end) require a high degree of active cognitive involvement. Cummins argues that a central reason why language minority students have often failed to develop high academic proficiency in the second language is because instruction has emphasized context-reduced, "unrelated to their prior out of school experience." Cummins suggests that the language proficiency framework he proposes--the context/embedded / context/reduced and cognitively-undemanding / cognitively-demanding continuum are not the only dimensions to language proficiency or communicative competence (pp. 384 -387).

## 2.6 Literature in the ESOL Classroom

Often it is not until the ESOL student has reached upper level ESOL courses, particularly the last level prior to exiting the program, that he or she is exposed to literature in the classroom. The MDCPS (1996) secondary ESOL CBC instruction incorporates literature as a vehicle towards literacy and culture, although there is only one literature anthology—*Literature and Language*—which was recently adopted by the district in April 99, while it is still awaiting state adoption for ESOL classes.

Stern (1985) argues that the lack of interest in using literature as an integral part of ESOL instruction in the U.S. is reflected in three areas: resources, training, and curriculum. First, there is a scarcity of resources and materials. Second, there is a need for teacher preparation in the U.S. in the area of using literature as part of teaching ESOL. Third, there is an absence of objectives for the role of literature in ESOL. In addition, Stern conceptualizes the roles of using literature in ESOL programs. Literature can be used as a pedagogical tool to develop pronunciation exercises and literature-based dramatic activities. According to Stern literature immerses students in contextualized dialogues and helps non-native speakers to acquire cultural idioms and colloquial expressions, master grammatical structures.

According to Sage (1987), literature penetrates students' consciousness and lives and correlates usefully and appealingly to the students' situations. Effective literature has communicative power, for the story presents a situation through symbolic gestures and acts that students can recognize and envision in their daily lives. Furthermore, Sage incorporates identifying and drawing in students' past experiences as one of the principles for teaching fiction in the ESOL setting: "Because the story is universal, students from all cultures have surely had some experience with it" (p. 58). Adeyanju (1978) suggests that literature for ESOL students should be culturally significant and universal. Povey (1979) and Widdowson (1975) agree that literature does not have to be classical to be effective in ESOL instruction.

## 2.7 Multicultural Literature: A Bridge Towards Academic Proficiency

Spears-Bunton (1998) defines multicultural literature in the context of literature that invites the student to explore a multiplicity of cultural perspectives and engages the reader "in multiple images and perspectives with which to think, dream, and play." Spears-Bunton's definition of multicultural literature reflects the idea of multicultural texts as a bridge to critical thinking:

> Multicultural-literature experiences instill the disposition in communities of readers to weigh new knowledge against old knowledge, taken-for-granted assumptions and to question the attitudes and behaviors that accompany reified knowledge.

Spears-Bunton sees multicultural literature as a vehicle for transforming the individual's perspectives as well as his or her world-view. She argues that multicultural literature study is "inherently transformative." Furthermore, Spears-Bunton describes multicultural literature as an essential component of a "true" democratic society:

> Multicultural literature speaks with the voices inscribed by the infinite boundaries of human possibilities –the stories of humanity as told by itself. It is necessary and sufficient if American school children are to be grounded in the principles of a democratically organized society.

In his book The Great Canon Controversy, Casement (1996) outlines the philosophical and political tenets of anti-canonical discourse. Although he is a strong supporter of the traditional "great books" of Western civilization, Casement attempts to situate the canon controversy in light of new space for transcultural universality. He defines the contemporary currents of anti-canonical philosophy as a postmodern movement. He argues that the postmodern mind vision considers knowledge as context-bound, limited by the time, place, and the social context from which it emerges. In this sense, a plurality of belief systems constitutes knowledge, as opposed to universal human truths. Thus, to a postmodernist, knowledge is plural, varying among human beings, relative to the contexts in which it is conceived (Casement, 1996).

In defense of multicultural literature, Jay (1991) writes: "A commitment to multicultural education also belongs to our historical moment as we witness a renewed interest in democracy, and as we ask how a democratic culture might be fashioned" (p. 266). She further argues that in the United States oppressive ideology categorizes certain individuals as marginal to the interests of the country. Thus, responsible curriculum practice requires criticism of discrimination in all of its forms. Jay believes it is the duty of educators to oppose educational practices which encourage cultural chauvinism, and that "Cultural education must aim to re-present historically that ours has always been a multicultural society and that the repression of this heterogeneity (usually in the service of one group) ultimately threatens the cultural vitality and even survival of every group within it" (p. 226). Finally, Jay argues that a cross-cultural education initiated a cultural re-vision and everyone involved comes to understand different points of views and to see his or her culture as from the outside.

As Morris (1985) highlights, the "American literary canon" is composed of the stories we have institutionalized. She makes an analogy to describe the blinding effect the literary canon has on teachers and students: "Fish can't see the water because they are in it. Students and teachers frequently fail to see the canon because they are of it" (p. 470). In other words, the literary canon is the medium in which we process knowledge. The narratives that form the current American literary canon were produced by men of the first half of the twentieth century, each imprisoned in his own particular history and heritage, each centering his narrative on a master metaphor" (pp. 472- 479).

Blair (1991) has found that the inability or hesitancy of high school LEP students, who have completed an ESOL program, to express themselves in regular English classes "diminishes when they are led to read autobiographical narratives, talk about the[illegible]. and write their own autobiographies" (p. 24). She has designed a unit entitled "Voices in American Literature" that combines reading, speaking, and writing through narratives by non-native English speaking authors. These works are, in part, autobiographical and incorporate themes of assimilation, acculturation, and alienation.

## 2.8 Conceptual Model: Reader Response Theory

The conceptual model draws from reader response theory. In this section, I will present an overview of reader response theory. This theoretical approach to reading texts will later serve as the philosophical foundation for the analysis and discussion developed in chapters four and five. A critical question challenging ESOL teachers is how to get students to enjoy reading in and outside the classroom. The importance of making reading relevant to the ESOL student's experiences is one practical application of reader response.

Research in reader response theory highlights the importance of connecting literature to a student's unique experiences as a way to engage the student's interest. This concept invites the student to interact with the text and build academic skills in the second language. Reader response theory places the reader as the primary meaning-maker in the reading process. As Spears-Bunton argues (1992), "Reader-response theory helps us to understand both the reader, the text, and the social context in which response occurs by reminding us that response is a holistic performance by the reader" (p. 23).

Reader response theory arose as a reaction against formalism, which regards the literary work as an art object with an existence of its own, not necessarily as related to the author, reader, or socio-historical context. From the formalist point of view, the text has its own meaning and reveals that meaning to the reader who examines it for the interrelation of its formal elements and its potentiality for unity and wholeness, where all of the formal elements inform each other as well as the text's wholeness. Reader response theory opposes formalistic theory. Reader response theory argues that the text does not exist until it is read by the reader, so to a reader response critic, if a text does not have a reader, it does not exist and has no meaning. It is the reader and the experience the reader brings to the text that creates meaning. Thus, in reader response theory, the text is not the most important element of interpretation, the reader is. The reader's interpretation of a text is not only legitimate, but as legitimate as the author's interpretation (Guerin, Labor, Morgan, Reesman, and Willingham, 1992). Reader response became recognized as a distinct critical movement in the 1970's, emerging as part of a political climate defined by growing anti-authoritarianism within the academy (Gorden and Kreiswerth, 1994).

Rosenblatt is considered one of the key reader response theorists (Gorden and Kreiswerth, 1994). In *Literature as Exploration,* Rosenblatt (1995) argues that a student might choose to contemplate the literary work for its aesthetic value, but students can and should be taught to read literature for its emotional relevancy to the students' unique experiences. Rosenblatt presents a literary theory that incorporates Aristotle's views on the relationship between the reader and the literary text as a personal aesthetic experience. In this sense, reader response theory can be traced as far back as the writings of Aristotle, who based his critical theory at least partly on the text's effect on the reader (Gorden and Kreiswerth, 1994). Aristotle defines aesthetics and learning as integral: "to be learning something is the greatest of pleasures. . .the reason of the delight in seeing the picture is that one is at the same time learning--gathering the meaning of things" (Aristotle, trans. 1931, p.227). Thus, Aristotle seems to interpret the aesthetic experience between the reader and the text as one in which the reader *delights* in learning and looking for "meaning" or making connections among the elements of the literary work because the reader acts as an intimate part of that process. The key word here is *connection,* or "gathering the meaning of things."

According to Rosenblatt (1995), students need to be provided with a secure environment and the classroom dynamics that promote the student reader's responses: "The classroom situation and the relationship with the teacher should create a feeling of security. He should be made to feel that his own response to books, even though it may not resemble the standard critical comments, is worth expressing" (p. 64).

Rosenblatt (1995) creates a place for reader response in the literature classroom, while she goes beyond accepting the contemporary, sometimes extreme, approaches that promote a reader's response without asking the student to look at other elements of the literary work. She argues that teachers need to connect students to the relevancy of the literary experience and highlights that the student's response is only the vehicle for engaging the student's mind. Furthermore, Rosenblatt advances that once the student has learned to intimately respond to the text, a process of growth can begin. In this way the readers come to understand their personal vision of the text and look for other perspectives that will further enrich their understanding of the literary work's wholeness.

## 2. 9 Critical Review of the Literature

Much of the educational research in the area of ESOL students' cultural experiences attempts to answer the question: "What are the connections between native cultural experiences and the teaching of English to speakers of other languages?" However, more research is needed in the area of ESOL student's transcultural experiences. The ESOL student's transcultural identity is his or her concept of self as learner. It is a continuous journey, where he or she is negotiating the acculturation process that redefines the student's past, present, and future perspectives. Research is needed in this area of ESOL culture in transition, or ESOL transcultural identity, as the ESOL student re-creates his or her perspectives of what it means to be a new learner within a new community of learners. In this sense, the research is inconsistent with the needs of the growing number of ESOL students in South Florida, whose goals reflect academic discourse as a vehicle for successfully performing in a new academic community.

Furthermore, research exploring the transcultural experiences of ESOL students of diverse Hispanic cultures is needed mainly because of the great number of Spanish speaking ESOL students in Florida schools, primarily the South Florida region. In Miami-Dade County, 44% of the student population is Spanish speaking (as cited in Diaz, 1990). There are a large number of students representing Hispanic cultures who attend institutions such as Miami-Dade County Public Schools and Miami-Dade Community College. However, there is a need for qualitative research focusing on Spanish-speaking students in the Florida public schools and community colleges, particularly focusing on the role of Cuban ESOL students. Such research will contribute to a better understanding of the special needs of diverse cultural populations within our schools so teachers and curriculum specialists can focus instruction on relevant objectives that address the special nature of ESOL students and programs.

More specifically, there is a need for research that explores ESOL transcultural identity of Cuban students in connection to teaching literature in the ESOL classroom. Such research would offer teachers and curriculum researchers further insight for designing and implementing academic language programs that provide Cuban ESOL students an academic curriculum compatible with the academic expectations of mainstream high school and community college courses in English. As ESOL educators continue to revisit TESOL methodology, implementing new approaches to enrich and strengthen ESOL programs, means that further research is needed in the areas of ESOL transcultural identity, especially in the context of teaching literature as a way to academic proficiency. In Miami-Dade County, both at the high school and community college levels, a great percentage of the ESOL population is made-up of Cuban ESOL students. In order to continue to learn about the transcultural experiences of Cuban ESOL students, further qualitative research is needed in this area.

Likewise, more of the research generated in the field of TESOL should reflect an interest in the transcultural experiences of diverse cultures. The nature of ESOL programs is to move students toward academic proficiency of English, so the student can perform at the level of the native English speakers. In order for educators to make meaningful connections between transcultural experiences and ESOL methodology, there needs to be more significant qualitative research focusing on the transcultural experiences of ESOL from many cultures. Thus, the TESOL curriculum is progressing, revisiting traditional ideas and designing innovative approaches, to incorporate new ways of developing second language skills.

# CHAPTER THREE

# METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the qualitative methodology used in this study and explains the rationale for choosing a phenomenological approach. It includes information on the following: a) rationale for the study; b) role of the researcher; c) experience of the researcher; d) participants: rationale and purposive sampling; e) data collection; f) research questions; g) analysis and interpretation of the data; and, h) statement of ethical responsibility. The primary purpose of this chapter is to describe the design of this study in the context of the philosophical and pragmatic dimensions of a phenomenological approach.

## 3.2 Rationale for a Qualitative Study

Phenomenology is a philosophy in which the source of all meaning is the lived experiences of human beings. The task of the phenomenologist is to describe the structures of experience. Furthermore, the phenomenologist's goals are to explore consciousness, imagination, and interaction. The modern founder of phenomenology is the German philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) (Groden and Kreisworth, 1994). In this tradition, "To accomplish the analysis of the object as it registers in the consciousness, the phenomenologist suspends all presupposition, inferences, or judgments about the object outside the consciousness" (Holman and Harmon, 1986, p.371). However, later phenomenologists such as Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) have questioned Husserl's claims that description can occur without presuppositions. Heidegger argues that inherent in knowing are the assumptions and beliefs that guide interpretation (Groden and Kreisworth, 1994). Similarly, in this study, I will explore the students' lived experiences by applying reader-response techniques to analyze their transcultural experiences. Using reader response as a phenomenological approach, I framed the participants' experiences within my own transcultural experiences in order to better understand their ESOL transcultural identity.

A phenomenological approach was used to investigate the transcultural experiences of Cuban-born students studying at Miami-Dade Community College and Barbara Goleman Senior High School. This study focused on the transcultural experiences of six students; each participant selected contributed his or her unique ESOL transcultural experiences. The six participants' interviewed were recorded in an in-person, question/answer format. A phenomenological approach was used in Chapter Four to create portraits representing an account of the students' transcultural experiences. Eisner (1991) illustrates the art of recreating peoples' experiences as the essence of creating portraits:

> The creation of such a portrait depends upon the writer's ability to experience the qualities of place, to conceptualize their relationships, to experience the shifting pervasive qualities that permeate those relationships, and, not least, to render them through the text. The episode as lived has passed; the text as written lives. Thus the qualitative is used in two senses. The first is the ability to experience a particular state of affairs; to grasp how it was. The second is its representation. . . through the text. (pp. 20 – 21)

This study describes and explains the transcultural experiences of Cuban students and makes connections between the autobiographical portraits of these students and TESOL methodology, focusing on the learning of literature and language. The researcher drew on the students' transcultural experiences to compare and contrast the shared, as well as unique experiences among the students. In particular, this study is a phenomenological case study, "in which human experiences are analyzed through the detailed descriptions of the people being interviewed (Creswell, 1994, p. 12). Creswell (1998) summarizes the philosophical tenets of the qualitative phenomenological research study:

> Researchers search for the essential, invariant structure (or essence) or the central underlying meaning of the experience and emphasize the intentionality of consciousness where experiences contain both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image, and meaning. Phenomenological data analysis proceeds through the methodology of reduction, the analysis of specific statements and themes, and a search for all possible meanings. (p. 52)

Therefore, in Chapter Four, a phenomenological data analysis was utilized to deduce some relevant specific statements and themes that emerged from the students' transcultural data. I then framed the students' transcultural experiences within my own transcultural perspectives, and created an autobiographical data set in the form of a researcher's journal. Also, I used exploratory questions to organize the explicit and underlying themes that emerged from the interviews. This thematic analysis served as the groundwork for applying a reader response interpretive theory to the students' transcultural interviews.

## 3.3 Role of the Researcher

Throughout the analysis (Chapter 4) and discussion (Chapter 5) of this study, I used the first person narrative with the purpose of lessening the distance between the researcher and the reader. As Creswell (1994) outlines, the personal pronoun "I" conveys a personal, informal perspective "that lessens distance between the writer and the reader (a qualitative epistemological stance)" (p. 43). This philosophical position does not weaken the power of the research; rather, it is strengthened by a concept that reality is constructed through subjective and objective perspectives. Thus, qualitative research allows the researcher to interact intimately with the participants' world. Moreover, Eisner (1991) refers to the following Deweyian perspective: "Since what we know about the world is a product of the transaction of our subjective life and a postulated objective world, these worlds cannot be separated" (p. 52).

In light of this, the subjective element of qualitative research contributed to the study's philosophical scope and paradigm, for it gave the researcher the opportunity to situate himself or herself as a participant observer in the research process. As Janesick, (1994) highlights, ". . .the qualitative researcher is very much like an artist at various stages in the design process, in terms of situating and recontextualizing the research project within the shared experience of the researcher and the participants in the study" (p. 210). I am Cuban-born, have lived in the U.S. since I was three years old, and was raised in South Florida. My transcultural perspectives gave me the opportunity to interact intimately with the research process, participating as an insider, as opposed to observing the process from a distant perspective. Thus, my transcultural experiences informed the phenomenological analysis of the students' experiences, serving as an autobiographical window for analyzing the interplay among similarities and differences of each unique student portrait. The analytical explications of the students' transcultural experiences are presented within particular themes, emerging from, and, at the same time, contributing meaning to the phenomenological portraits of the students' transcultural experiences. My analysis included autobiographical commentary as a vehicle for framing the students' transcultural perspectives and discovering and reconstructing the experiential reality of the study's participants. In addition, my experiences as an ESOL educator, who works with literature in the high school and community college settings, contributed to Chapter Five, where making connections between transcultural experiences and the teaching of literature will be discussed.

## 3.4 Experience of the Researcher

My own transcultural experiences were an important dimension of the methodology. I did a phenomenological analysis of the data as viewed through my own transcultural perspectives. In other words, I interpreted the participants' transcultural experiences through the eyes of my transcultural experiences. The idea of exploring my own experiences as a way of better understanding the student's perspectives was rooted in the philosophy that the researcher's subjectivity enriches the understanding of analysis.

As Janesick points out, ". . .the qualitative researcher, as designer of a project, recognizes the potential of design. The design serves as a foundation for the understanding of the participants' worlds and the meaning of shared experiences between the researcher and participants in a given social context" (p. 210). In my experiences as an ESOL educator I have come to see the importance of considering my students' transcultural experiences in the classroom. Thus, interacting with ESOL students for more than six years contributed to the design of this study. My interaction with ESOL students sparked my interests in the second language learner and his or her transcultural experiences.

I gained further interests in qualitative inquiry as a doctoral student, enrolled in a qualitative research methods course at Florida International University. As part of the class requirements, I had the opportunity to develop a pilot study on the topic of transcultural experiences. The pilot study, completed in Spring 1997, was entitled High Interest Literature: A Bridge to Culture, Identity, and Critical Thinking. Maxwell (1996) highlights that qualitative researchers use pilot studies to generate concepts held by the people being studied. Thus, pilot studies provide researchers with an understanding of the meanings that these lived experiences have for the participants (Maxwell, 1996). The purpose of the study was to chronicle the life experiences of a recent Cuban immigrant and to design a model for connecting high interest literature to the student's experiences. Designing and completing the pilot study gave me a better understanding of some of the relevant cross-cultural issues for the ESOL student I interviewed. The results of the pilot study helped me to write exploratory questions for this dissertation.

As a qualitative researcher, both my professional and personal qualities are relevant to this dissertation. As Eisner (1991) describes, we recognize researchers as people who hear and see more about a particular object or situation, but before they can deal with the act of interpretation or evaluation, researchers must be able to notice their qualities. Eisner argues, "The inability to experience these qualities leaves no grounds for further reflection. We can only appraise and interpret what we have been able to experience. At the most sophisticated level we call these people 'connoisseurs'" . . . (p. 17). Therefore, my academic experiences as a researcher are informed by my unique experiences as a human being. My own transcultural identity informed the participant portraits that I created from analyzing the students' experiences.

I was born in Camaguey, Cuba, and I arrived in Miami at age three. My parents left Cuba because they did not agree with the post-1959 Cuban government's politics. They wanted to raise me in a democratic country. As an adult, I value my freedom of speech and freedom of expression. I appreciate and admire the struggle that many ESOL students and their families have undertaken in pursuit of such freedoms in the U.S.

Presently, I am pursuing a doctorate in education with concentrations in community college teaching, English, and TESOL. My Bachelor's degree is in English, and my Master's degree is in English and TESOL. I was a full-time faculty member at Barbara Goleman Senior High School, where I was an ESOL department chair, teaching ESOL classes in grades 9-12. I was also the ESOL department chair for three years at Miami Coral Park Senior High School. At Coral Park I was one of the writers of the revised ESOL CBC (1996) for Miami-Dade high schools. I have been teaching ESOL for six years and one half years now, working mainly with advanced ESOL students, who are in transition from ESOL to mainstream English classes. I am also an adjunct instructor at Miami-Dade Community College, Wolfson Campus, where I teach college credit ESOL courses. In addition, I have taught mainstream English students at Ponce de Leon Middle School and Miami Coral Park Senior High School. Over the summer I was hired as a full-time, tenured-track instructor at Broward Community College, where I will I will be teaching teach ESL college prep.

## 3.5 Participants: Rationale and Purposive Sampling

Creswell (1998) outlines the following seven criteria for collecting data in a phenomenological study:

1. Multiple individuals who have experienced the phenomenon are traditionally studied.
2. Typical access and report issues include finding people who have experienced the phenomenon.
3. A purposeful sampling strategy is to find individuals who have experienced the sampling strategy.
4. The type of information collected includes interviews with up to ten people.
5. Information is recorded in the form of long interview questions.
6. Common data collection issues are bracketing one's experiences and the logistics of interviewing.
7. Information is typically stored in computer files. (pp. 112-113)

In light of this, the framework of the study was to describe and explain six phenomenological portraits of high school and community college students: four Cuban born students and two American born student of Cuban-American culture. The participants were from Barbara Goleman Senior High School and Miami–Dade Community College. Two of the high school students were Cuban-born students, exited from ESOL. The third high school student was an American born student (native English speaking, of Cuban-American culture) enrolled in regular English language arts. Both community college students were Cuban born--one was enrolled in regular English courses and the other in advanced ESOL courses.

The six phenomenological portraits were explored in the form of lived experience pieces, representing the students' transcultural experiences. Although the study represented only Cuban students, the qualitative methodology, protocol questions, and thematic analysis presented was used as a model for other educators who wish to explore transcultural experiences of students from diverse cultures. The model can be used in both ESOL and mainstream language arts programs, where NNS students continue to develop second language skills beyond the ESOL class.

I have chosen to write about Cuban ESOL students because although their historical ties to Miami-Dade County Public Schools can be stretched to the late 1950's, qualitative research on ESOL Cuban students in the MDCPS system is limited. This lack of qualitative research, particularly phenomenological, transcultural experience studies, is inconsistent with the large number of Cuban students enrolled in the Miami-Dade Public Schools. More research is needed in the area of investigating Cuban ESOL students' transcultural experiences with the goal of making connections between their transcultural experiences and the teaching of literature in the ESOL classroom. I chose Barbara Goleman Senior High School and Miami-Dade Community College (Wolfson Campus) because they both service a multicultural community and house extensive ESOL programs. Each participant was selected because he or she could contribute unique perspectives of the ESOL transcultural experiences for both high school and community college students. I chose the participants for their ability to articulate their lived transcultural experiences. In other words, they were not timid about expressing their opinions. The participants' names were obtained from faculty members at these institutions and the selection criteria included one of the following: 1) born in Cuba and lived there for at least ten years or 2) born in Miami of Cuban parents or 3) born in Cuba, but lived in Miami since early childhood. The participants were both male and female. Two of the participants were Cuban-born NNS high school students, one female and one male. Two of the participants were Cuban born NNS community college students, one female and one male. Two of the participants were Cuban-American NESS high school students, two males. As Creswell (1998) identifies, "the participants in this study need to be carefully chosen to be individuals who have experienced the phenomenon" (p. 55). Likewise, Maxwell (1996) supports that, "Selecting those times, settings, and individuals that can provide you with the information that you need in order to answer your research questions is the most important consideration in qualitative sampling decisions" (p. 70).

## 3.6 Data Collection

Eisner (1991) describes an educational connoisseur as someone who talks to people and listens to what they have to say. Eisner considers interviewing as a powerful resource for learning how people perceive situations. He emphasizes, "We need to listen to what people have to say about their activities, their feelings, their lives" (p. 183). Maxwell (1996) differentiates between the research questions and the interview questions in stating that "Your research questions formulate what you want to understand; your interview questions are what you ask people in order to gain the understanding" (p. 74).

According to Maxwell, the interview questions are ". . .judged not by whether they resemble the research questions, but by whether they provide the data that will contribute to answer these (p. 74). Maxwell further emphasizes that "The development of good research questions requires creativity and insight, rather than a mechanical translation of the research questions into an interview guide; it depends fundamentally on how the interview questions actually work in practice" (p. 74). Finally, Maxwell specifies the relationship between the research questions and the interview questions: "However, these real questions will generally be far more context-specific and diverse than the broad, general research questions that define what you seek to understand in conducting the study" (p. 74).

The data was collected in the form of recorded, in-person student interviews, researcher's journal, and document reviews. These three different methods support qualitative principles of triangulation, which is defined by Berg (1995) as a researcher' use of multiple lines of sight for the purpose of validity:

> Each method thus reveals slightly different facets of the same symbolic reality. Every method is a different line of sight directed toward the same point, observing social and symbolic reality. By combining several lines of sight, researchers obtain a better, more substantive picture of reality; a richer, more complete array of symbols and theoretical concepts; and a means of verifying many of these elements.

The interviewing procedure was implemented as follows:

1. The four Cuban-born students were asked a series of interview questions related to their experiences in Cuba and the U.S. The two Cuban-American students were

asked a series of interview questions related to their experiences in the U.S.

2. Each participant was interviewed three times, and a total of 18 interview sessions composed the primary data set for this study.
3. The interviews were recorded two ways—by the researcher (audiocassette recorder) and transcribed by a court reporting student into a computerized aided transcription machine (CAT System). The transcriptions were then converted to Microsoft Word.
4. A researcher's journal was kept during the thematic analysis of the interviews. The researcher's journal composed a second data set for the study.
5. Document reviews of the interviews and the researchers journals were designed for the purpose of thematic analysis.

The interview questions were designed to incorporate both descriptive and contrast questions. Spradley (1979) categorizes descriptive questions as grand tour, mini-tour, experience, and native-language questions. Grand-tour questions are broad in scope, allowing the participant to describe a great deal. Mini-tour questions are follow-ups to responses to grand tour questions. Experience questions are questions which bring out the non-routine aspects of life, and native-language questions allow the participant to let the researcher know what a particular term means. The contrast questions ask for differences or contrasts within or between some. The interview questions that were implemented in this study will included grand tour, mini-tour, experience questions, native-language questions, and contrast questions.

For purposes of triangulation, I used these categories of questions to allow for diverse levels of answers, contributing to an in-depth thematic analysis of the data. In addition, the interview questions focused around essential dimensions of the transcultural experiences, such as the participant's personal perspectives, family life, school interactions, social world, and cross-cultural views.

The estimated time line for data collection was the following:
Summer 98: Participant Interviews
Summer 98: Transcribe Interviews
Summer 98: Transcriptions converted to Microsoft Word
Fall 98: Edit Transcriptions
Fall 98: Preliminary Review of Interviews - Develop Researcher's Journal
Spring 99: Second Review of Interviews and Researcher's Journal
Spring 99: Thematic Analysis of Interviews
Summer 99: Review of Documents -- Interviews, Journal, and Thematic Analysis

## 3.7 Research Questions

Creswell (1998) recommends that the organization of the research questions be divided into one central question and several subquestions. He supports the idea that qualitative researchers should reduce their entire study to a single, overarching question and several subquestions. When generating the central question, a researcher should state the broadest question about his or her study (Creswell, 1998). The following exploratory questions provided a preliminary framework for the thematic analysis of data in Chapter Four and responses to the research in Chapter Five.

Central Exploratory Question:

From the perspective of four Cuban-born, non-native English-speaking students (NNS), what are the essential structures of their transcultural identities?

Exploratory Subquestions:

1. What are the underlying themes that account for the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences?
2. What are the universal transcultural structures among the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences and the Cuban-American NESS student's experiences?
3. What are the possible structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests in relation to their transcultural experiences?
4. What are some connections between the structural themes inherent in the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences and teaching literature in ESOL?

## 3.8 Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

A qualitative study draws its strengths from the interaction among the objective and subjective processes of data collection, analysis, triangulation, and interpretation. As Eisner (1991) proposes, what is essential in qualitative inquiry is rationality. Eisner defines rationality as ". . .the exercise of intelligence in the creation or perception of elements as they relate to the whole in which they participate. Human rationality is displayed whenever relationships among elements are skillfully crafted or insightfully perceived" (p. 51). To Eisner, rationality is an intellect that requires the sophisticated skill of perceiving the order of relationships. In this sense, rationality is not as narrowly defined as logic.

From Dewey's work, Eisner (1991) derives a concept of "transaction," which he defines as the locus of human experience (p. 52). The phenomenon that emerges between the interaction of the objective and the subjective is the "transactive" (p. 52). According to Eisner, "what we can know about the world is always a result of inquiry, it is mediated by the mind" (p. 52). He describes the impossibility of understanding the world solely from an objective perspective because human beings come to know the world through their minds. Eisner (1991) relates this concept of the "transactive," or locus of human experience, to the nature of qualitative research:

> Since what we know about the world is a product of the transaction of our subjective life *and* a postulated objective world, these worlds cannot be separated. To separate them would require the exercise of mind and since mind would need to be employed to make the separation, anything 'separated' as a result of its use would reflect mind as well as what was "separated" from it. Hence what we have is experience—a transaction rather than independent subjective and objective entities. (pp. 52-53)

In this study, the primary strategies used for the data analysis were "categorizing strategies," (Maxwell, 1996, p. 78) such as coding and thematic analysis. The students' transcultural experiences were analyzed for recurring themes to describe the essential structures of the students' experiences. Furthermore, the relevant structures of the students' transcultural experiences were interpreted in the context of ESOL educational theory, specifically the teaching of literature.

Eisner (1991) discusses triangulation as "structural corroboration" (p. 110). He highlights that ". . . structural corroboration is a means through which multiple types of data are related to each other to support or contradict the interpretation and evaluation of a state of affairs" (p. 110). Also, Denzin (1978) proposes four types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. In addition, Janesick contributes another form of triangulation, interdisciplinary triangulation. For purposes of triangulation the following approaches were used in this study:

1. *data triangulation* -- the use of a variety of data sources: Interviews, researcher's journal, and document review notes were used in this study.
2. *investigator triangulation* -- the use of several different researchers or evaluators: An outside reader who is an ESOL educator was used in this study.
3. *theory triangulation* – the use of multiple perceptions to interpret a single set of data: The perceptions of four different Cuban-born students and two Cuban-American students born and/or raised in the U.S. were used in this study.
4. *methodological triangulation* – The use of multiple methods to study a single problem: Phenomenological study and case study methods were used in this study.
5. *interdisciplinary triangulation* – the use of other disciplines to inform the research process: TESOL theory and literary criticism were used in this study.

Language is not the same as the experience it represents. As human beings, what we know is our interaction with the world. This is a qualitative study that used interview as one of the primary techniques in gathering the transcultural experiences of the researcher. The organizational principles that guided the analysis and presentation of the students' experiences emerged through the act of recursive research and analysis and was guided by the research questions as well as the relevant themes generated by the participants themselves. In other words, the interpretive categories emerged from a thorough comparison / contrast of the data sets. Furthermore, the selected topics were referred to within the context of a philosophical model that allowed the researcher and the reader to analyze and interpret the interview in light of second language issues.

## 3.9 Statement of Ethical Responsibility

Ethical responsibility is an essential aspect of qualitative research, especially when engaging in interview sessions and the representation of participant perspectives. Creswell (1998) outlines key ethical responsibilities of the qualitative researcher:

> A researcher protects the anonymity of the informants, for example, by assigning numbers or aliases to individuals. A researcher develops case studies of individuals that represent a composite picture rather than an individual picture. Furthermore, to gain support from participants, a qualitative researcher conveys to participants that they are participating in a study, explains the purpose of the study, and does not engage in deception about the nature of the study. . . A final ethical issue is whether the researcher shares experiences with informants in an interview setting such as in a case study, phenomenology, or ethnography. (pp. 132 –133).

In light of this, there were no risks or benefits involved for the students' volunteer participation in this study. I informed the students that their responses would be maintained anonymous, and I identified their names in the dissertation by pseudonyms. Also, I explained to the students that they would be part of a research study and the purpose of the study. In addition, I informed them that they may withdraw their consent and discontinue participation in this research project at any time without any negative consequences. I assured them of their rights to ask questions concerning the procedure, and I answered any questions to their satisfaction. Prior to the interviews, I obtained their informed consent in person. I asked each participant and his or her parents / legal guardians (in the case of minors) to read and sign the consent form (See Appendixes A and B). The consent forms were written in both English and Spanish for students who might have had difficulty understanding any portion of it or whose parents did not speak English.

### 3.10 Summary

I chose a qualitative design for my study because of its appropriateness to the nature of the exploratory questions. The exploratory questions incorporate highly abstract concepts--culture, language, and identity. Thus, a qualitative approach, such as phenomenology invites interpretive skills that require the rich complexities of description and evaluation to unveil the essence of the phenomena under investigation. In this case, the phenomena are the lived experiences of students metaphorically living in two cultures, their native experiences and their life in the U.S. These are highly symbolic realms of knowledge requiring a method that invites the profound impact of interpretation. As Maxwell (1996) expresses, "The strengths of qualitative research derive primarily from its inductive approach, its focus on specific situations or people, and its emphasis on words rather than numbers" (p. 17). In this study I focused on the essential themes of the ESOL students' transcultural experiences and recreated their unique experiences to analyze relevant themes and their connection to the teaching of literature.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the data and report the results of the research. This chapter is designed to present, describe, and analyze the interview data of the six participants. Through phenomenological data analysis, I will proceed through the data reduction, analyze the emerging statements and themes, and a search for all possible meanings. The thematic analysis is focused and organized around the central and secondary exploratory questions introduced in Chapter 3. Exploratory Question 4 will be addressed in Chapter Five.

This chapter also presents a model representing an interpretive construction of the participants' cultural perspectives as they relate to ESOL transcultural identity and teaching literature. The interview data is presented as a narrative, both indirect and direct quotes. The six participants' transcultural experiences and my own transcultural perspectives were the source for all meaning constructed in this study. From a close examination of the interview data, I describe and explain the essential structures of experiences, and explore the underlying meaning of the participants' experiences. Also, I drew on the students' transcultural experiences to compare and contrast the shared, as well as unique experiences among the six participants. Next, I framed the students' transcultural experiences within my own transcultural perspectives, creating an autobiographical data set in the form of a researcher's journal. My transcultural perspectives are presented in italics and are journal excerpts written during and after data analysis. The thematic analysis served as the groundwork for a reader response interpretive theory to make connections between teaching literature and the students' experiences in Chapter Five.

## 4.2 The Setting

Barbara Goleman High School is situated in Miami Lakes, on a 36.34 acre 10 building lot, just east of I-75, in an unincorporated area of Miami. Goleman High can accommodate 3,431 students and has fourteen portables to deal with the overcrowding problem. The ESOL program includes over 450 students with a total student population of 3,741, and mirrors a diverse Hispanic population originating from a number of Latin American countries from Central and South America, and the Caribbean. The student population is comprised of 88% Hispanic, 7% African-American, 4% Anglo, and 1% Asian, Indian, and Multiracial. In 1997, 648 students in grade 11 took the Communications section of the High School Competency Test and 638 students took the mathematics section. 76% of the students passed the communications section and 74% passed the math section. The High School Competency Test is administered during the 11th and/or 12th grade and is a requirement for graduation.

The community surrounding Goleman High is primarily Hispanic, bordering the City of Hialeah and is considered a bilingual community. In the area there are townhouses, apartments, condominiums, and single-family homes. In addition, the surrounding community also includes small business and light industry. Approximately 50 percent of the students are from families that are at or below the poverty level and receive free or reduced lunch at school. Many of the students at Goleman were born outside the United States. Therefore, English as a second language presents a definite challenge for many of the students.

Miami-Dade Community College was established in 1959 and opened its doors to students in September of 1960. MDCC is a multi-campus, two-year, state-supported community college with five campuses and numerous outreach centers. Miami-Dade is nationally recognized as the largest community college in the country. It is governed by a seven-member District Board of Trustees and a college president. The Mitchell Wolfson Campus is located at 300 N.E. 2nd Avenue, in downtown Miami.

In the Fall of 1996-97 49, 836 credit earning students were enrolled college-wide. This number does not include non-credit students. During the same year the Wolfson campus served 23,023 students. MDCC awards Associate in Arts and Associate in Science degrees, Vocational Credit Certificates in Business, Technical, Allied Health and Public Service occupational program areas. In addition, MDCC provides non-credit Continuing Education, such as Intensive English, for its students. In 1996 – 97 MDCC awarded 6,246 degrees. 90 percent of students with an Associate in Arts degree continue their education at a four-year college. MDCC has no dormitories. 31 percent of MDCC's students are between 21 – 25 years of age and the average age is 26. More than 67 percent are enrolled as part-time students. The ethnic/racial composition of the college is the following: 16% White, non-Hispanic; 21% Black, non-Hispanic; 61% Hispanic; and 2% Other. Female students makeup 58%f the population, while 42 percent are male. In a report entitled "Graduate Profile, 1997-98" (Maytin-Bexon) data shows that about 58% of Associate degree graduates began their college careers in ESL, ENS, or college preparatory courses. There are 780 full-time faculty, and 1,345 part-time faculty. Of the full-time faculty, 22 percent have earned doctorate.

## 4.3 Biographical Portraits of Students Born and Raised in Cuba

The following section presents the biographical portraits of the Cuban NNS students (See Chart 1).

### Yessica

Yessica is presently an 11th grader at Barbara Goleman Senior High School. She is sixteen years old and was born in Havana, Cuba. In terms of race and ethnicity, Yessica describes herself as Hispanic and/or Cuban. She is tall, light olive-toned, has dark hair and has intelligent dark eyes. Yessica was born in Havana, Cuba in a town called Lawton. Havana was the only place Yessica had lived before coming to the U.S. She came to the U.S. when she was eleven years old and has lived here for over five years. She flew over from Cuba with her parents and brother. In Miami, they met her mother's family, who had already been in the U.S. for twelve years. Yessica still has family in Cuba, mainly her father's side of the family.

Yessica has participated in the MDCPS' ESOL program, although she has been exited from the ESOL program, and is currently enrolled in an Honors English class. Before coming to Barbara Goleman Senior High School, Yessica attended Miami Lakes

Middle School. Yessica enjoys being a teenager. She perceives the expression "Your teenage years are the happiest years of your life" as contradictory, however:

> At times, I think so, at other times I don't. And then I criticize everybody who says so, because -- it's true that we don't have responsibilities and we don't have real worries, but still in our own little world we do have worries and we do have problems. But disregarding all that, any stage in life has problems and things, but I think it is probably the stage you could live, because it's the stage when you're young when you can do many things. When you're experiencing. . . Most of the things you're experiencing are new to you because you're like in the step into the new world. And I think it is a very adventurous stage, and I think that's why I like it so much.

Both her parents were born in Havana, where they studied in preparation for professional jobs. Although her father was a trained engineer, he works as a manager in a factory. In Miami, Yessica's mother works in a neurological clinic. Since 1992, Yessica has resided with her family in Miami Lakes. According to Yessica, her parents left Cuba because they wanted a better future, with more opportunity and dreams that America could offer.

When I asked her in which language she expresses herself best, Yessica responded, "I think in Spanish because I studied it longer." Despite her insecurity over speaking English she is very articulate in both languages. At home she speaks Spanish all the time because her parents do not speak English. At school she speaks English in class and Spanish with her friends.

I asked Yessica to elaborate on what she would wish for if she had three wishes. Her three wishes were 1) for her family members still in Cuba to be in Miami with her, 2) to have a successful life, 3) and to end the plight of homeless children.

Yessica comments on her second and third wish by clarifying her definition of success and why homeless children are so important to her:

> I think that a successful life changes with time. Your perception of it changes with time, not only for me, but for basically everybody who deserves it. . .what really touches me is homeless children. That's one of my weak points, because I love children very much, very much. And for me to see homeless children, that's the worst thing. My family, you know, those places where you call and you give twenty dollars to take care of children, my family does that. I think that everybody should do that, because what is twenty dollars to a person who earns three hundred weekly, or even more? Just the fact that when you go to sleep, you know you are saving a life. A lot of children, who are yours too, deserve to live. I think that it is the most important thing that could happen to a human being. And I really hate the fact that there are homeless children. I can't believe how a person, parents could bring a child into the world and basically throw them away, or -- -- I don't know, it's just things that I really haven't understood about humanity or society.

When asked about Yessica's ideas of a great life, some of her wishes dovetail with her ideas for a better society. She explains, " Oh! A great life would be always next to my family with a good, good husband. The profession I wish is now a dentist. And two of the most healthy children I could ever raise that would be a great life."

Alex

Alex is presently a junior at Barbara Goleman Senior High School. He is sixteen years old, white, of medium height, and has dark hair and blue eyes. In terms of ethnicity and race, Alex describes himself as Hispanic. He was born in Havana, Cuba and came to the U.S. in 1996. Alex came to the U.S. when he was fourteen years old and has been in the U.S. for three years. His parents attended the university in Cuba and are both engineers. His father came to the U.S. in 1994, and his mother came to the U.S. two years later with Alex and his younger brother. According to Alex, his parents left Cuba to improve their political and economic situations. Alex and his family currently reside in Hialeah.

When I asked Alex how many languages he speaks, Alex humorously replied, "I speak three languages, Spanish, bad Spanish, and bad English." He feels he expresses himself best in Spanish, which he identifies as his "home language." Alex speaks mostly Spanish at home with his parents and with his Spanish speaking friends. At school, he speaks English in class and with his English-speaking friends. He is motivated to continue improving his English because he recognizes that it will help him in the future.

Alex proudly tells the story of his father coming to the U.S. He says his father courageously crossed the Florida straits on a raft. Later his father was able to get permission from the Immigration and Naturalization Service to bring his family to the U.S. because of political circumstances. After two years, his father was able to bring Alex, his younger brother, and his mother to the U.S.

Alex already had two aunts and an uncle in the U.S. His oldest aunt had lived here for about thirty years and his uncle for about seven. "Most of my family is in Cuba," Alex says, "I have my grandparents, most of my cousins, and uncles." Although Alex has visited other states in the U.S., Miami is the only city in which he has lived.

I asked Alex the question, "If you had three wishes, what would you wish for?" and he answered that he would wish for health, love, and money. Alex described his idea of a great life as, "A life full of love and health -- -- as long as you are healthy you could enjoy your life. It all depends on you and your goals." Although money and wealth are important, Alex emphasizes that he does not believe that wealth brings happiness or love. To Alex, "The most important things in life are health and love."

I asked Alex what he liked doing in his free time while he lived in Cuba. He said he enjoyed keeping busy:

> Free time, I never stopped doing something. I always have to do something, because that's part of our culture. We always either do something to improve our house, or living, or go fishing. That's what I like the most, fishing. . . for fun. On weekends, go out with friends, go party. And during summer days, what I did the most was fishing.

In Miami, however, he feels limited, more pressured, because time goes by very fast for him. Alex explained that time ". . .seems like it runs faster here than any other place." During his free time he maintains a busy schedule of activities:

> . . .I exercise after school to be in shape. I run. I skate. And when I have time, I go fishing, but during weekends with my family I don't have here the opportunity to go to beaches as I had in Cuba, but I pretty much keep my same, how could I say it, the same customs I had in Cuba.

Liz

Liz is presently a student at Miami-Dade Community College, Wolfson Campus. In terms of race and/or ethnicity, Liz describes herself as Cuban. She is 20 years old, white, of medium height, with blue eyes and dark hair. She lived in Havana for sixteen years. She has been in the U.S. for four years. Liz was born in Santa Clara, Cuba and came to the U.S. in 1994. She was in 11th grade when she left Cuba and then completed high school here in the U.S. She also completed the ESOL program at MDCC and is in her second year of community college.

Liz speaks two languages, English and Spanish. She feels she expresses herself best in Spanish. She speaks Spanish at home and English at school. Liz traveled by boat from Cuba to the U.S. with her parents and brother. Her father's cousins were already living here in the U.S. Her parents completed high school in Cuba. Her father was a mechanic and her mother was a secretary. In the U.S., her father works as a mechanic and her mother works in a factory. Liz has a lot of family members who still reside in Cuba, including her grandfather, uncles, aunts, and cousins. Miami is the only place she has lived in the U.S. She currently resides in Southwest Miami.

In Cuba, Liz loved going to the park in her spare time. " I love that," she recalls, "I always went with my friends after school in the afternoon, you know." Here in Miami, Liz loves going to the beach whenever she has time. When Liz contrasts life in Cuba and life in the U.S., she reminisces on how in Cuba she had more leisure time, while in the U.S. she is very busy with work and school:

> **Question:** What sports did you play in Cuba?
> **Liz:** I played basketball; I really liked that one.
>
> **Question:** What sports do you play in the U.S.?
> **Liz:** None. I don't have time.
>
> **Question:** Did you work in Cuba?
> **Liz:** No. Never.
>
> **Question:** Describe an afternoon after school in Cuba?
> **Liz:** Afternoon? You know, after school, with my family we watch TV. That's all you can do there in the afternoon. If not you can go like walk for a little while, that's basically it.
>
> **Question:** Describe an afternoon after school here in the U.S.?
> **Liz:** Well, an afternoon here, if you don't work, you have a lot of things to do, you can go whatever place you want to and enjoy with your friends you can go advise it your family, if not you can go to your house relax, watch TV or go to the movies.

Some of Liz's tastes have changed since she has been in the U.S. She used to listen mainly to Latin music. Now she still listens to Latin music, such as merengue and romantic love songs, but she also listens to music in English. Although Liz likes American music, she does not like rock music.

Liz likes talking about the transition of adjusting to life in the U.S. I asked her about what she envisions for herself in the future and if she had three wishes what would she wish for? Liz responded that she would visit Cuba, bring her family to the U.S., and, finally, would like to get a good job.

### Mario

Mario is presently a student at Miami-Dade Community College, Wolfson Campus. He has been a student at MDCC for three semesters. He was born in Camaguey, Cuba, where he lived in the same house for nine years. In terms of race and/or ethnicity, Mario describes as Cuban and/or Hispanic. Mario is 21 years old, white, tall and slim, with dark eyes and brown hair. He currently resides in SouthWest Miami.

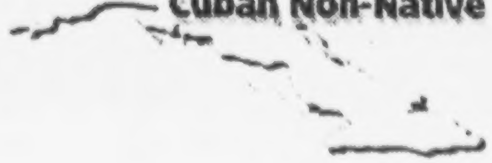
Before coming to the U.S., Mario attended a college preparatory school and later enrolled at the university in Cuba. His father was a civil engineer, and his mother graduated high school. When he was nineteen years old, he came to the U.S. with his parents and younger brother. According to Mario, they left Cuba because life under communism was difficult.

Mario speaks both Spanish and English, although he feels he expresses himself best in Spanish. He speaks Spanish most of the time, but he speaks English with his girlfriend and on the telephone. At school, he speaks both languages. In class he speaks English, but he speaks Spanish with his English-speaking friends. Mario has been in the U.S. for two years and two months.

Mario did not work in Cuba, but in the U.S. he does work. In Cuba, Mario liked playing sports and going to the beach. He especially loved to play basketball and volleyball. Here in Miami he has also learned how to play soccer. Mario works in a small office where they sell wholesale merchandise. Mario emphasized that, more than anything else, he wishes to be with his friends that he left behind in Cuba. Mario described how his friends in Cuba write to him and ask him to describe the U.S. They want to know how it is to be in the U.S. and I say, "Look, if you were over here, there wouldn't be a problem. That's it. But since you are not here, it's not the same."

Chart 1

## Cuban Non-Native English Speaking (NNS) Students



|  | Age | Grade | School | Born | Native Language | Arrived In U.S. | Learned English | Current Courses | Resides |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Yessica** | 16 | 11th | Barbara Goleman Senior High School | Havana Cuba | Spanish | 1992 | ESOL at MDCPS | English / Language Arts | Miami Lakes |
| **Alex** | 16 | 11th | Barbara Goleman Senior High School | Havana Cuba | Spanish | 1996 | ESOL at MDCPS | English / Language Arts | Hialeah |
| **Liz** | 20 | 2nd Year Community College | Miami-Dade Community College | Santa Clara Cuba (Havana 16 Yrs.) | Spanish | 1994 | ESOL at MDCPS & MDCC | Mainstream English | S.W. Miami |
| **Mario** | 21 | Last semester ESOL Program | Miami-Dade Community College | Camaguey Cuba | Spanish | 1996 | ESOL at MDCPS & MDCC | ESOL | S.W. Miami |

## 4.4 Biographical Portraits of Students Born / Raised in the U.S.

The following section presents biographical portraits of the Cuban-American NESS students (See Chart 2):

### Romeo

Romeo is an 18 year old senior at Barbara Goleman Senior High School. He was born in Havana Cuba, although he came to the U.S. with his parents and his brother when he was only four months old. Romeo and his parents left Cuba as part of the Mariel Exodus. He lived in New Orleans, Louisiana until he was approximately eight years old. Presently he resides with his parents in Hialeah Gardens.

Romeo describes himself as Cuban. He is black, of medium height, stocky and strong, and has dark eyes. He is bilingual, proficient in English and Spanish. Romeo feels he expresses himself best in English. He speaks Spanish at home and English at school Romeo has not returned to Cuba since he left with his parents when he was a child. He has, however, expressed interest in visiting Cuba someday: "I would love to see where I was born at, you know, I would love to see it!" Romeo related how some of his friends who have returned to Cuba say that Cuba is now "kind of poor, and yet people are still surviving . . ." Romeo commented that he compares the Cuban experience to the African experience: "I see it as Africa you know, as people still struggling, but they're still living, you know what I am saying, you know, that's how I would describe it."

### Hermes

Hermes is presently a 10th grader at Barbara Goleman Senior High School. At the time of the interview he was 16 years old. In terms of race and / or ethnicity, he describes himself as being Cuban-American. He is white, tall and has dark eyes and dark hair. Hermes was born in Hialeah, Florida and currently resides in Miami Lakes. He has lived in South Florida all his life. His parents are from Cuba. His father was born in Havana and his mother in Camaguey. Also, his mother's side of the family is of Italian ancestry. His parents came to the U.S. at the ages of 7 (father) and 5 (mother). According to Hermes, his grandparents came to the U.S. because they "did not like communism."

Hermes is bilingual, proficient in both English and Spanish. He believes he expresses himself best in English. He speaks both languages at home, except with his grandmother, who does not speak English. At school, he speaks mainly English, but speaks some Spanish, especially in Spanish class. Although he does speak Spanish with some of his family members, Hermes speaks English most of the time, "...when I'm with my friends at school, regularly with my parents, with my brother." Hermes has never visited Cuba. He would like to visit Cuba someday, although not at the present time. I asked why he would not visit Cuba today, and he answered, "Not at the present moment because of Fidel Castro, but as soon as he's thrown, overpowered, I would definitely visit Cuba."

On some afternoons, Hermes spends his after school time involved in drama club meetings: "If I have a drama meeting, I'll go and we talk about the musicals we're going to perform in the near future." On other days, he goes home to do his homework, read, and watch T.V. Hermes loves going to the movies, especially to see horror movies, and admits he "likes to be scared in those movies." He also enjoys watching classical films, reading books, and talking to adults. "I prefer to talk to grown-ups, because they have more experience than younger kids, like usually if there is like a group of elderly people or a group of young kids, I would usually get along with the older people," he says. Many of the books Hermes likes to read represent a diverse selection: "Usually it's science fiction or mystery novels. I love classics, like Dickens. Dickens is one of my favorite authors." In addition, Hermes is eclectic in his musical tastes. He listens to alternative rock, gospel, country, some forms of rap, and R & B. He considers himself to be a musical person. He does not, however, play sports. During the summer, Hermes had the wonderful experience of working at an engineering office. He was the secretary for the office manager. I asked Hermes to share his ideas of a great life. This is what he had to say:

> **Question:** If you had three wishes, what would you wish for?
> **Hermes:** Money of course, but that's not -- -- that's like real selfish, so, I wouldn't wish that. I would wish for everybody to be happy in the world. And everybody to have something to look forward to. No homeless people, because that's something that really affects me, that I don't really feel comfortable with. For them to have clothing, food, a place to sleep at at night. That's two, right? Okay. And also for everybody to have hope in life. A lot of people have given up, and they don't care anymore of their lives. I would say for everybody to have a reason to live.
> **Questions:** What is your idea of a great life?
> **Hermes:** A great life is where you're proud of what you have accomplished and work hard, but at the same time enjoy life.

Chart 2

## Cuban American Native English / Spanish-Speaking (NESS) Students

| | Age | Grade | School | Born | Native Language | Resides |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Romeo** | 18 | 12th | Barbara Goleman Senior High School | Havana, Cuba<br>*(lived in U.S. since 4 months of age)* | English / Spanish | Hialeah Gardens |
| **Hermes** | 16 | 10th | Barbara Goleman Senior High School | Hialeah, Florida | English / Spanish | Miami Lakes |

### 4.5 Cuban NNS Students' Transcultural Experiences

Nine major themes emerged from the thematic analysis of the participants' transcultural experiences, which was guided by the central question, **"From the perspective of four Cuban, non-native English-speaking students (NNS), what are the essential structures of the students' transcultural identities?"** The nine major themes and their essential structures, which emerged from the interview data, are the following (See Chart 3):

I. **Portrait of a Country:** The students preserve mental pictures of their homeland.
II. **Personal Memories:** The students value special moments in Cuba.
III. **Discovering America:** The students alter their perceptions of the U.S.
IV. **Living in Miami:** The students differentiate between life in Cuba and Miami.
V. **An Education in Cuba:** The students hold dual perspectives on Cuba's schools.
VI. **School in the USA:** The students view U.S. education as a road to future opportunities.
VII. **Family Ties:** The students contrast family life in Cuba and the U.S.
VIII. **Friends Across the Ocean:** The students explore friendship in Cuba and the U.S.
IX. **Socio-political Visions:** The students focus on freedom of speech.

Chart 3

# Central Exploratory Question:

*From the perspectives of four Cuban, non-native English-speaking (NNS) students, what are essential structures of their transcultural identities?*

**The following are essential structures of the Cuban NNS students' transcultural identities:**

I. **Portrait of a Country:**
The students preserve mental pictures of their homeland.

II. **Personal Memories:**
The students value special moments in Cuba.

III. **Discovering America:**
The students alter their perceptions of the U.S.

IV. **Living in Miami:**
The students differentiate between life in Cuba and Miami.

V. **An Education in Cuba:**
The students hold dual perspectives on Cuba's schools.

VI. **School in the USA:**
The students view U.S. education as a road to future opportunities.

VII. **Family Ties:**
The students contrast family life in Cuba and the U.S.

VIII. **Friends Across the Ocean:**
The students explore friendship in Cuba and the U.S.

IX. **Socio-political Visions:**
The students focus on freedom of speech.

### 4.6 Portrait of a Country

**An essential structure of the Cuban NNS students' transcultural identities is that students preserve mental pictures of their homeland.**

Many years before Alex, Yessica, Liz, and Mario arrived in the U.S., Cuba, their homeland, served as a rich, fertile landscape that would later shape their roles and identities in America. Thus, their transcultural experiences in the U.S. are defined, in part, by their cultural context in Cuba—past experiences always shaping the future and redefining the present. Their experiences in Cuba and, later, their experiences in the U.S. give meaning to the transcultural phenomenon of living in two worlds. An essential structure of Cuban NNS student's transcultural identity is memories of Cuba, the land, the city, its people, and its lifestyle. The participants' memory of their experiences in Cuba influences their perspectives in the transcultural journey of self-discovery here in the U.S.

Yessica was eager to describe La Habana (Havana), the capital of Cuba, where she was born. She described Havana as a big city, and compared it to a downtown area, such as Miami. Yessica offered a detailed description of a particular neighborhood in Havana called "La Habana Vieja, " which translates as Old Havana. Yessica emphasized that from her parents she learned about Old Havana. She described her parents version first: ". . .in the 50's it used to be one of the most elegant places, the biggest stores, somehow like downtown Miami." She contrasted, however, this earlier vision of Old Havana with "now it's basically in ruins." Yessica portrayed Havana as a metropolitan area, with educational and recreational spots, yet still preserving a hometown air:

> It has un capitolio (a capitol); it has un planetario (a planetarium); it's basically a museum, but it has a museum of everything, of animals and plants, of planets,

> everything. Everything there -- -- basically that's the center of La Habana, which is where most tourists go. Where I lived, I lived in calle "C" in Lawton. Basically it was little; Lawton was little. It wasn't that big. I had my school like two -- -- a mile away, so I used to go walking.

Alex was also born in Havana, the capital of Cuba. He described Havana as the most advanced city in Cuba, where most of the commercial centers are located. Alex explained that Havana has the greatest population on the island, more than any other province in Cuba. According to Alex, Havana houses many cultural centers, such as theaters and el Morro Fortress. Alex was very enthusiastic about describing the city of Havana.

What I found intriguing about Alex's and Yessica's descriptions was the rich detail in which they were able to portray Havana. Both described their place of birth with a zestful painting, a colorful landscape of the famous landmarks, and interesting places one could visit. Their crystal clear memories for illustrating the city as if they had just departed a few days is an essential structure of their present transcultural identities because it serves as a reference point for who they are becoming today. In Yessica's case she had just recently been to Cuba, but many of her descriptions were also from her childhood. Both participants demonstrated a sense of pride in describing Havana, although Yessica did emphasize that Havana's glamour had tarnished since the days of her parents' youth. Perhaps her recent visit to Cuba influenced her to describe Havana as if it were in ruins today compared to the 50's era, since she had already lived in the U.S. for a while and had the American standard of living as a reference point. Four to five years have past since Alex and Yessica left Cuba to live, yet they preserve the memories of their homeland, able to describe their neighborhoods as if they had both just visited their island homeland yesterday.

*I was born in Cuba also, although I have not returned since my parents brought me to the U.S. at the age of three. Listening to Alex and Yessica reminisce about Cuba, caused me to reflect on my country of birth, contributing to color parts of the picture/puzzle that makes me up as a person—my own transcultural identity. I have no conscious memories of Cuba, except every once in a while, an image seems to surface from my subconscious, a sense for a place I've seen or smelled or touched long ago; but then I awake from that momentary "vision" and am not sure if it was just a picture my grandmother showed me once or a story another family member shared with me. As I listened to the participants' stories I realized that, as a participant observer in this study, that "momentary vision" is re-awakened in me through their vivid descriptions and my transcultural identity becomes a little more whole as I, in turn, better understand who they are.*

Mario was not born in a metropolitan area like Havana. He was born in the town of Camaguey, the heart of the Camaguey province. Mario described the town in where he was born by making a historical connection between its physical appearances and historical elements:

> It's kind of an old city in the part that I used to live. All the streets, there's no straight street. They are like in curves. . .Winding. I think it was because the pirates went to rob the city or something like that, and they get lost, so they made the idea like that.

*Although this was a brief description of Camaguey, Mario's description of the old, winding roads, and his powerful illustration of the central town, captured my curiosity. I was born in this town, but its memory is buried deep in a part of me, waiting* *to be reborn if I ever return to Camaguey. I shared with Mario the address of the house where I lived for the first three years of my life, and he said he used to pass that house frequently. The moment Mario said this, I felt a personal and immediate connection between his reality and my own. Mario's strong desire to describe the town where he was born is an underlying theme that accounts for his transcultural experiences because it is both part of who he was and part of who he is in his present reality. As he searches in his memory to describe his hometown, the images he evokes are further enhanced and clarified when he realizes he can act as a reference point for my understanding of where he was born as well as where I was born. In this sense, Mario's transcultural experience is manifested in his desire and determination to illustrate his hometown, so I can "experience" it in the same light.*

Alex portrayed Cuba in the context of a political and economical commentary: "Cuba, besides the situation that it's going through right now with all the political problems and economic problems, Cuba it's my homeland. I would like to go back to Cuba, not to stay, but to visit my friends." Alex emphasized that Cuba is the place where he was born, his homeland. He described it as "A beautiful island with great beaches, where the sand is fine and the water is clear." What Alex enjoyed most about Cuba, besides being with his friends and family, is fishing. In the summertime, he visited Varadero Beach, where he went camping. He mentioned that in Cuba there are no poisonous animals that could kill someone—"It's all, -- -- it's fun, it's a fun island."

Yessica's memories mirror a colorful collage of friends, family, and school framed within the landscape of her homeland. What she remembered most of all about Cuba were her grandparents: . . . "that's the image I hold the most; I remember going to their house, and basically, spending the entire day with them." Also, she remembered her school, which was called Camilo Cienfuegos. Yessica explained that prior to the communist era, her school used to be a religious convent, but later "in Cuba religion got eliminated—and when that happened, they turned basically all convents into schools and my school was one of them." Yessica illustrated memorable characteristics of attending school and interacting with her friends, ". . . it used to have three floors. It used to be like a square around a patio. . . and I remember that a lot. And I remember my friends playing in the street . . .that's what I remember the most, and I really miss it. . .I miss it a lot."

I asked Mario to describe his impressions of Cuba. He told me that when he thinks of Cuba, it's a place where he had a lot of fun and where a person remembers the good times and not the bad times. According to Mario, Cuba has been destroyed for almost fifty years. It is not the same Cuba that you had seen in the 50's or 60's. In his vision, Cuba is "Nothing how it could be." Mario explained that his favorite place in Cuba was the beach:

> For me, the best beaches are the ones that are in my hometown. I wouldn't change the beach that I have at my house; I wouldn't change it for some other beach, because that beach was special, because you could find everything. If you want to see sharks, you could go to the canal. There was an entrance to a bay so that the fish would cut through the coral. For sure you could see them, and if you wanted to see tropical fishes, you could find them.

Similar to Mario, but more focused on Cuba's political and economical problems, Liz described Cuba by emphasizing the physical deterioration of her homeland:

> Cuba is not like before. It has a lot of problems. Provinces are really bad, you know. I don't know, the streets, the houses, the buildings are destroyed, I don't know, it's hard for me to see all that.

*The most alluring aspect of talking to these students about their impressions of Cuba was their willingness and motivation to describe Cuba's attractive characteristics, despite their references to Cuba's political problems. In an ironic sense, when they described Cuba it was like watching a wonderful, complex play, where at times, the actors hid behind an always-present curtain.*

Alex said he would like to visit Cuba, not to stay, but simply to visit. In Alex and Yessica there was a clear direction towards embracing future challenges here in the U.S. Yessica's and Liz's memories of Cuba were laced with her description of a country physically deteriorating, yet filled with her love for the special people and places she left behind. Mario expressed the same bittersweet sentiments of a Cuba that, in spite of its "bad times," must be remembered for its "good times." These common threads shared by the Cuban students of bittersweet nostalgia and highlighting moments in the past are underlying themes that account for their transcultural experiences. These are the memories that help them to redefine who they are and, thus, constantly reshape their transcultural identity.

### 4.7 Personal Memories

**An essential structure of the Cuban NNS students' transcultural identities is that the students value special moments in Cuba.**

Although the students were able to share rich, detailed descriptions of their native country, I wanted to investigate some of their favorite memories in Cuba. An essential structure of the Cuban NNS students' transcultural identities is favorite memories in

Cuba of belonging with family and friends. I asked the students to describe the most important memory while they were in Cuba. Like students in the U.S., the Cuban students related special childhood memories, which remind them of life in their native Cuba.

When I asked Alex to describe one of his favorite memories in Cuba, he responded that most of the time living in Cuba was fun. "Being sad in a country like Cuba that doesn't belong there, you either have to be happy or laughing or something." Ironically, the experience he related as his favorite memory was both sad and happy. Alex told me about the time his mother was pregnant, and Alex wanted his parents to name his baby brother Alexis. They didn't want to name him Alexis because they didn't think that it was a good name. Alex doesn't remember where he got the name from, but he liked it. He even fought with his parents over the name: "From that day, I understood that a brother is more than a friend, it's more than family, it's like the person you grow with, and the person that's always there to help you." Although they decided on another name for his brother, Alex considers this a favorite childhood memory because it reminds him of how close he has always been to his brother.

One of the most significant memories of life in Cuba for Yessica was celebrating her seventh birthday: ". . . it was my seventh birthday and my parents threw me a wonderful party and everybody was there. I had two clowns, one magician. Basically, everybody who I could possibly love was there." Once again, Yessica enthusiastically described the details of her special childhood.

Liz described working in the field in Cuba as one of her favorite memories because she associates it with spending quality time around family and friends. She explained that she did not like working in the fields, but enjoyed the interaction among the people, the feeling of closeness in getting together:

> Yes. You have to go with everybody at the school, you have to go to work in the fields, and my memory, it was a great memory for me, because with like everybody on Sundays we'd get-together with all the families, and that was an experience I wouldn't forget.

Mario was also eager to share his meaningful experiences in Cuba. During the sessions he expressed that among the things he misses most about leaving Cuba are his friends. At one point he became very emotional talking about a friend he had a disagreement with, but Mario was grateful that they were able to mend their friendship before he left Cuba. When I asked Mario about his favorite memory of living in Cuba, he recreated a very colorful portrait of his high school graduation:

> I think it was the day we made the party because of the graduation, the high school graduation. We made -- --the whole school made a party like a special club, and we went there. And there were three guys that were communist, but they weren't sure about what they think, and they think that communism was right and how they felt. And we were open having discussions and stuff like that, but after the discussion was over, and we went to play baseball, and we had the strong discussion. And that day the party was getting over, one of these guys, because the other two weren't there at the moment, they were in the city, they were in their own towns, and this guy named Raul, and me and my two other friends that used to hang out together, we used to hang out with those communist guys too. And he called us and told us that it didn't matter what we think. What really mattered was that we love each other and that was what was important.

A common denominator among all the participants' favorite memories is that their experiences mirror a sense of belonging with family and friends. Yessica recalled that at her birthday party everyone who she could possibly love was there. Alex remembered understanding that his brother would be his lifetime friend. Liz reminisced working with people of her community, not because of the work itself, but the feeling of interaction. Mario thought of a friend who held very different political views than Mario, but ultimately both friends were able to look beyond their differences and recognize the value of friendship.

*As the students shared their favorite memories, I thought of one of my favorite childhood memories. One difference, of course, is that I was in Miami, and not Cuba, but as a young boy, I can identify with the students' feeling of belonging to family and friends. I remember one day when my grandmother announced that she was going to buy me a Creepy Crawlers set, which was a hot plate, with metal mold and metal molds to make rubbery insects in different colors. The day finally came, and I walked with my grandmother, hand-in-hand, from our house all the way to Zayres Department Store. I had never been so excited; I was on top of the world! And I remember how loved I felt, walking back and forth, speaking in Spanish, yet thinking in English about my new toy. These are the thoughts that the sessions awaken in me a redefining of my transcultural identity, so I can better understand my students' journeys.*

## 4.8 Discovering America

**An essential structure of the Cuban NNS students' transcultural identities is that the students alter their perceptions of the U.S.**

The Cuban NNS students emphasized that after they arrived in the U.S. they started reevaluating their perceptions. It was not the way they had pictured it before. This is a significant factor of the Cuban students' transcultural experience that contributes to their current idea of who they are presently, who they are becoming, and how they are shaping their future transcultural reality. An essential structure of the Cuban NNS students' transcultural identities is the change in perspective once they arrive in the U.S. These students enter the U.S., bringing with them their rich cultural experiences of life in their native country, ready to experience a new way of life. Because their past experiences contribute to their transcultural experiences, in this sense, their prior experiences in Cuba are a bridge to their new community. They begin developing their transcultural identities long before they arrive in the U.S.

I asked them to share with me their first impressions of arriving in Miami. I wanted to capture the initial transcultural experience, knowing that at that point they were not going to be simply tourists, but would be adopting the U.S. as their new home. The four Cuban students described the initial transcultural experience in different ways, but all shared the feeling of beginning a new journey that continues to embrace the old.

Alex explained that when he first arrived in Miami, it was a big shock because everyone in Cuba idealized this country as a paradise. He also thought of the U.S as a paradise before coming here. Alex observes, however, that the U.S. is "good, it's a land of prosperity and all that, but you have to work for what you want. You have to work hard, it's not that easy." Conversely, he recognized that in the U.S. "everything is beautiful everything is clean," and emphasized highlights that when people work they have the opportunity to get what they want, but they have to work hard.

Before coming to the U.S., Alex's vision of the U.S. was influenced by his family, peers, and teachers. Once he was here, he realized that it wasn't the "paradise" that he envisioned, yet recognized that the U.S. symbolized opportunities for his future. This re-visionary act is part of the process of defining and redefining his transcultural identity. Alex's ideas of the U.S. started changing because he felt the need to redefine who he was at the time and who he would become in his new community. To successfully perform in his new educational community (or any other arenas), Alex needed to redefine his vision of the U.S., see it not for the perception that others had created for him, but for a more realistic vision of the U.S. In this sense, an underlying theme of his transcultural experiences his confronting a new reality. This realization that the U.S. is not just easy street initiates a change in his transcultural identity, and it is this new perspective that will allow Alex to redefine his earlier perspectives.

Similarly, before coming to Miami, Yessica was influenced by her friends to dream of he U.S. as the place where the streets are made of gold. Before coming over, Yessica pictured the U.S. very differently compared to her ideas of the U.S. today. In Cuba, she remembers sitting and talking with her friends, imagining the U.S. as a place where money grows on trees, "where you're never going to be needing something, where you're going to have everything." Now, she realized that living in the U.S. involves having "to work a lot to get what you want." I've seen it with my parents, and I never imagined it was going to be so much work like it is." Like Alex's transformation she was changed through watching how hard her parents had to work once they came to the U.S.

This change in perspectives, ideas of the U.S. before and after, is an underlying theme among all four NNS students as a metamorphosis that allows them to revisit all of the old ideas they had about the U.S. and redefine their present and future in the U.S. New perspectives arise from questioning their old realities as well as their present ways of understanding their world.

*One of my students gave me a picture of a beautiful valley in Cuba, El Valle de las Viñas, where the land is dark red, and the valley sides are lush green. I see a picture* *of Cuba's landscape, and I feel as if I have been there before, like I have appreciated the island through my own senses. But I can only trace my earliest memories to Mexico City, where my parents and I waited for the official papers to come to the U.S. I can best identify to Hermes' and Romeo's experiences because my perspectives of living in the U.S. have been influenced by life in the U.S., not outside the U.S. For me the myth has been the Cuba I really only know through the stories of my parents, grandparents, my students, and the participants of this study. My transformation from just the Cuban-American U.S. perspective to a better understanding of the Cuba of today has come as an ESOL teacher, primarily from my interaction with students who have recently left Cuba. Undoubtedly, I have been transformed from my interaction with the students of this study, so I am undoubtedly connected to the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences since I also experience my world through a bicultural reality.*

Mario's mental picture of the U.S. was different than some of the other students' ideas. Mario said he really didn't think a lot about what life would be like in the U.S. Perhaps it is because Mario lived in a rural town in Camaguey, Cuba, rather than in the city of Havana, where he might have been less exposed to perceptions of the U.S. Nevertheless, he did experience the cultural transformation of re-defining any previous ideas he had of the U.S. Mario highlighted his first impressions of the U.S. by relating a story in which he felt that someone treated him as if he had come from an underdeveloped country, exposed to very little. Someone had given him a ride home, and on the way, tried to impress Mario by emphasizing the highways and supermarkets in Miami. Mario felt this man was patronizing him. Mario was offended that he was being treated like "somebody who has never seen like a supermarket."

Liz's ideas of the U.S., while she still lived in Cuba, were also different than the other three Cuban NNS students. She believed that life in the U.S. would be difficult because of the violent crimes in the U.S. she would hear about while she was on the island. She was scared of life in the U.S., and she described feeling disoriented when she first got to Miami, primarily because she "didn't know anything here. It was my first time coming here. I felt really sad you know, because I missed a lot of my family." Before she came to the U.S., Liz described that her ideas of the U.S. were shaped by what she heard people describe:

> In Cuba, they said a lot of things about the U.S. that the people rob you, that they kill you. And I thought what am I going to do there. And once you're here, you realize that it isn't true, you know most of the time.

An underlying theme in all of the Cuban NNS participants that accounts for the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences as the change in perspectives from their old ideas of the U.S. to new visions of the U.S. This common denominator of transforming their perspectives of life in the U.S. is an essential aspect of shaping their transcultural identity. It provides the ESOL students with the foundation to begin exploring their transculturalism in a new society.

## 4.9 Living in Miami

**An essential structure of the Cuban NNS students' transcultural identities is that the students differentiate between life in Cuba and Miami.**

All four of the NNS participants differentiate between the level of interaction among family and friends in Cuba versus interaction among family and friends in Miami.

Primarily, the participants felt that in Cuba they were able to spend more quality time interacting with family and friends, whereas in the U.S. they have less free time, but have struggled to preserve quality time for family and friends. An essential structure of Cuban NNS students' transcultural identities is the difference between close interactions in Cuba and more distant relationships in the U.S.

In Yessica's case Miami is a "fun place" to live because she is able to go out with her friends and there are many interesting places to visit. Yessica pointed out, however, that Miami is different than Cuba because "the neighborhoods are not the same. . .most of the time, you don't know the person who lives in front of you, or the person who lives beside you. . .I used to love that about Cuba." For Yessica, living in Miami has brought the opportunity to share very special moments with her family and friends, yet at the same time she always preserves the nostalgia of Cuba.

*In my experience of growing up in South Florida I can relate to Alex's connection to Miami's Cuban culture. Miami's Cuban influence is a constant reminder that we are not far from our heritage, an integral part of what defines the uniqueness of transculturalism, just as it defines the uniqueness of all six of these students' identities. From one perspective, I was raised in this Cuban-American, bicultural reality that is unique to the South Florida experience, yet there are many aspects of more American culture which I have been exposed to all of my life. Two aspects of American culture that I have experienced all my life is the urban lifestyle found in New York or Miami, including the architecture of these metropolitan cities. The dual reality for the Cuban NNS students is that after a few years of living in the U.S. they begin to feel more comfortable, yet ironically there is a part of them that continues to miss their homeland.*

One of Yessica's favorite memories of living in the U.S. was the first time she went to Walt Disney World: "I went with my parents, my brother and a friend of ours. It was a world of fairies, like a world full of fantasy and magic. . .the three days that I was there, I was not in this world . . .I loved it." Yessica has also visited Georgia and New York. She began by describing her visit to Georgia: "—it wasn't really a city. We were passing and then it was like a hee-haw town; it was like very camp like. It wasn't nothing like Miami, little houses, little farms; that's what it was like." In contrast, she described New York as completely different than Georgia:

> Completely different. It's incredible to see what man has created. Such powerful buildings, so tall that sometimes you can't see them, sometimes they're... The people in New York, they're always doing something. They can't stop. You see them. . . most of times they're dressed in such formal clothes, and they have tennis shoes on, and because they can't walk with high heels like women, it's really funny.

Yessica described one of her favorite places in Miami as the movies, since going to the movies is something she does a lot. Also, she enjoys spending time at home, "I like my house a lot." She described a Friday in Miami as "movie day." Her weekends also include going out to have dinner: "Saturday is usually a day in which you go out to have dinner, and Sunday is a day to stay home." Although Yessica has visited South Florida's beaches, she emphasized that they are very different than Cuba's beaches: ". . . Varadero, it is such an exquisite beach, and then you come here and the sand is hard and thick. . .the water, is everything but clear. . . the water is up to your knees and you still can't see your toes."

Although Yessica appeared to be excited when talking about the new cities and adventurous lifestyles she has experienced in the U.S., she is always reminded of the difference between the U.S. and Cuba. In this sense, both countries have their positive and negative sides. For Yessica the differences between her environment and lifestyle in Cuba versus the U.S. environment and lifestyle are underlying themes that account for her transcultural experiences.

Alex experienced the same conflict when, from one perspective, he experienced a comfort level with life in Miami because he feels a connection between his own transcultural experiences and Miami's Cuban influence. From another perspective, however, Alex recognized that despite the similarities in cultures, weekends in Miami are crammed with work, both in school and at work. Alex said he feels very comfortable in Miami because of its large Cuban population: ". . .the people that I feel more comfortable with, their language, their accents, and their customs. Their culture is pretty much the one I have, they share with me, the songs I like. I hang out with my friends; they basically have the same attitudes towards school. I feel good in Miami." Alex described a social event here in Miami during an after-school activity where they danced a Cuban dance called "La Rueda." Alex feels comfortable with his friends at school: "Like in Cuba we keep the same customs, and we share our experiences during the day and during class." I asked Alex to describe a weekend in Miami, and the first activity that he thought of is work: . . ."Well, work, and work, and more work. I work on Saturdays and Sundays too. I wake up at 6: 30, and I'm working 'til 6:00 in the afternoon." For Alex this is the side of Miami that represents hard work as well as study in order to take advantage of future opportunities in the U.S. His dad is a land surveyor, and on weekends Alex spends all day surveying with him. Afterwards, he likes to go home and relax with his friends.

Mario also expressed a sense of irony when describing his impressions of Miami in light of his memories of Cuba. Mario described Miami as a great place to interact with friends. He said that what he loves most about Miami is that the lifestyle allows him to keep busy with making plans with his friends: "If we want to play something we go out and play it. That's what I love the most, you can do whatever you want." Mario described a weekend in Miami as an exciting experience, where he and his friends can go to the beach to play volleyball or play soccer or basketball. However, despite the exciting activities that Miami can offer him, Mario does not particularly like Miami Beach compared to the beaches in Cuba because he feels there is too much development.

*During my childhood, adolescence, and adulthood there were several places I visited in the U.S., such as New York, New Jersey, Georgia, Louisiana, and North and South Carolina. Every time I would visit a different city outside of South Florida, I would experience a sense of culture shock. It was very obvious that the rest of the U.S. was very different than South Florida, especially Miami. First, I was away from a bicultural city to places where most of the residents had not even heard the first word of Spanish. Thus, being born or raised within the Cuban-American enclave of Miami, created a transcultural perspective for me that has not only influenced my perspective of the world as I know it, but has allowed me to use a bicultural perspective to learn from others' experiences.*

Like my own experience, Romeo and Hermes were also raised in the U.S. They shared with me their childhood and teenage experiences of life in South Florida and other regions of the U.S. They talked to me about their impressions of Miami and other parts of the U.S., and they also explored their ideas on Cuba. Hermes was born in the U.S. and has never visited Cuba. Romeo, like me, was born in Cuba, but has lived in the U.S. since he was an infant. Although Hermes has never visited Cuba, he pictures what Cuba would look like. His best reference point was to compare it to one of the other Latin American countries, The Dominican Republic:

> I really pictured it when I went on vacation to the Dominican Republic, and I saw the mountains and the palm trees. And I saw pictures of Cuba, and it reminded me so much of the pictures, and I felt like I was in Cuba, but I really wasn't, and that really made me sad.

Hermes told me his fondest memories of living in Miami have been spending time with his family. He also described one of his most precious memories as visiting Disney World with his family: "Usually my brother, my mother, my father, and I when we go to Disney World, we usually enjoy it very much. . . .we're always happy when we go there. It's a place we can all enjoy, even the adults."

Hermes described Miami as a very culturally diverse environment. He said that Miami is a great place to live, and he emphasized that Miami is probably the only place he could ever live in: "It's wonderful. There are a lot of activities, and lots of jobs, great schooling." He has, however, traveled in the U.S., and he describes the differences among Miami, Vermont, and New York City:

> The people were very different. They -- -- the people from Vermont, they were very kind. They were really -- -- they asked about that we were Cuban, because my father said we were Cuban-American. Well, they're Cuban, we're Cuban-American, me and my brother -- -- or my brother and I. And they were very interested in our culture. They asked a lot of questions like, why did we leave Cuba, how our experiences have changed. . . New York. It's has a lot of different cultures inside, just like Miami. It has more of a variety here. In Miami, it's more of a Hispanic cultural variety. Up there, they have Italian, Jewish -- -- it's I think -- -- it has a lot more cultures than here in Miami.

Romeo also described a recent experience in which his Mom rewarded him with a trip to Disney World for passing 11th grade. She also mentioned that if he passes the 12th grade, she would reward him with a trip to Cuba. He described his excitement when he got to visit Disney with his family: ". . .when I passed grade, my mom rewarded me by going to Disney World and that's the best thing that ever happened to me in the whole wide world, you know, because I did good in school and I passed, and I'm a senior . . ."

Romeo had lived in New Orleans before coming to Miami. He also commented on his childhood memory of life in New Orleans. He remembered that it was difficult compared to life in Miami because he was young, and he could not speak English:

> . . .I didn't know how to speak English until the age of six, around there. And my parents had -- -- always needed a translator and when my brother wasn't there and I wasn't there, and so, it was very difficult than here in South Florida.

*Hermes' and Romeo's Cuban-American transcultural experiences in Miami serve as a bridge between their culture and the Cuban NNS students' culture. Likewise Hermes' and Romeo's experiences serve as cultural context to analyze the essential structures of the Cuban NNS students' transcultural identities because now the Miami experience is part of the Cuban NNS students' reality as well. One of the universal structures among the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences and the Cuban-American NESS students' transcultural experiences is that both live in a bicultural environment in the U.S.*

## 4.10 An Education in Cuba

**An essential structure of the Cuban NNS students' transcultural identities is that the students hold dual perspectives on Cuba's schools.**

In general all four of the NNS participants shared positive memories about their school experiences in Cuba. However, a few of the participants shared the concern that as part of their educational experience in Cuba they were forced to or would have had to work in the fields and be separated from their family at certain times of the year. According to the participants, accepting scholarship opportunities meant attending selected boarding schools the government had designed as college preparatory schools. All four participants clearly praised the Cuban educational system in terms of its ability to deliver educational content, but criticized it in respect to the educational system's one party mentality. This dichotomy in relation to Cuba's educational system was a recurring concern expressed by all four NNS students, as well as the NESS students. An essential structure of the Cuban NNS students' transcultural identities is their dual perspective on Cuba's educational system.

Liz expressed her respect for the teachers and outlined a few of the differences between schools in Cuba and the U.S. Liz, who attended school in Cuba until 11th grade, highlighted some of the similarities and differences between going to school in Cuba and the United States: ". . it's like they teach almost the same, the same classes but different perspectives. Here in the United States a student does whatever they want to do. In Cuba it's not like that. It is more respect for the teacher . . ." Liz mentioned that she liked school in Cuba because she knew the people, the teachers, and the classes, despite the fact she had to study hard.

Yessica also expressed the pros and cons of her educational experiences in Cuba. Yessica enjoyed attending school in Cuba. She has always liked school. She considered herself a person who likes studying, but would rather do other things with her time than study. However, she enjoys learning, which is what she likes about school. Yessica's favorite subject in Cuba was math, she says it was her favorite subject because she ". .

.had such great teachers, I had very good teachers. Teachers, who taught me incredible . . ." Her least favorite subject in Cuba was history because she does not enjoy memorizing dates. She considers herself more of a logical thinker. Yessica describes a day at her school in Cuba:

> Enter school at 8 o'clock. I think get out at 4:30 if I'm not mistaken. I used to have my periods, which it wasn't like changing at all times. You had three classes, the first three classes with the same teacher. For example, he taught math, science, and something else. Then the other teacher taught history, English, and, sorry Spanish, and something else, and you had those three classes, and then go to the next teacher. So basically, you only had two teachers. And then during the lunch, while I was in fourth, fifth and sixth, I used to teach second and third grade. My lunch was with them, because during their lunch, they would come to the room, and I would teach them, and then we would go eat lunch together.

While Yessica was still in Cuba, she longed to get a scholarship to attend a very good boarding school in Cuba. However, according to Yessica, in Cuba receiving a scholarship meant going to a school where she would have to stay in school five days a week, During the weekdays and on weekends she would go home to her family: "I wanted it, because it was the best school, but I didn't want it, because it would be five days without seeing my parents. . ." Her other option would have been to attend what she called "el pre de la calle," which is a form of public boarding school where you attend in the mornings and afternoons and return home on a daily basis: . . ." My parents didn't want me to go internship, you know intern, but I also wanted to because it was the best school and my friends were going and I wanted to go to the other one." Yessica described the organization of the educational system she attended in Cuba, which went from first through fourth, called "primaria," from fifth to sixth, called "primaria segunda," from seventh to eleventh, called "secundaria," and after eleventh, called "el pre." After attending "el pre" the student goes to the university. In addition, Yessica described that in

Cuba she had a very close relationship with her teachers:

> . . . not only were they my teachers, but they had been my mother's teachers. And usually, they lived in my same block. We used to visit each other, and it was closer than here. Here you only see the teacher in school. . . The principal was very nice -- -- I remember she was a very nice person. She loved me a lot. And she also used to visit my house, because she knew my mother and my father. I think it is a lot closer and a lot binding than in this country.

Alex attended elementary and middle school in Cuba, went to high school up until the ninth grade and then came to the U.S. Alex has fond memories of his middle school experience in Cuba. He told me how he felt about his education in Cuba: "The curious thing about the teaching methods in Cuba, is that you have the same teacher through all the grades. The same teacher you have for second grade, you have for third, fourth, sixth until you get out." In high school, Alex had the same situation although there were different teachers, but ". . .the teachers that taught history he taught seventh, eighth and ninth." I asked Alex to describe a day at his school in Cuba. He started by describing a day at his middle school.

> A day, well, in middle school, well we started at 7:25 pretty much like here everybody gets in class. And then the teacher proceeds to introduce the class, good morning, like always, and the periods last for 45 minutes, approximately three periods and then a break for 5 minutes. Then three other periods and then that's basically it. We finish at 12:30, where we go to eat lunch. It's not like this school that we stop third period and we go to the cafeteria; it's just like that. First period to sixth period and we go eat. The classes are pretty much like here, a lot of work. The teacher explains the subject first, and then he assigns problems.

In Cuba Alex dreamed of becoming a professional some day. He wanted to study engineering. Alex told me, however, that compared to Cuba, there were more career opportunities in the U.S.: "Here, I know that I can get whatever I want as long as I study. And there, even though I could study, I wouldn't get the same education that I would get here." Alex said that he was still thinking about studying engineering, but he had yet to decide in which field of engineering he would major.

Mario attended "el pre" in Cuba. He liked school in Cuba, and he described "el pre" as a special high school for boys and girls, ". . .that was like a pre-university. . ." In Cuba, Mario liked geometry and history. Mario explains how he had to stay in school for two weeks and then go home to spend a weekend with his family. His schedule would rotate this way every fifteen days:

> The first days, I used to skip school everyday to go to my house, but after that I get accustomed and I like it. I really like it because we spend three years with the same people having all those activities and helping each other. . .Well, a day would be like we used to -- -- they used to wake us up at, I can't remember the time, it was 6:00 or 6:30, and then we went to the dining room to get the breakfast. After that we had like 10 minutes to go to the dormitories to brush our teeth or whatever, and then after that, we had this meeting in the center square where they used to give the news. And after that, we went to the classrooms. And at 12:00, we went to have lunch in the dining room again. And after that, we had like 30 minutes to rest or play basketball. And some days it was like Tuesday and Thursday, we had to go to work the land and then we came back at 5:00. After that, we get a shower and we have to study. We have to do that. We need to study or some people study and some people don't. And in the nights, the people went to the houses or people went to the school or went to a beer factory that was nearby to drink some beer and stuff like that. And on Thursday there was a dance like a disco, it was recreation.

I asked Mario what he thought about the labor aspect of the educational system, when the students were asked to work in the fields. Mario said he did not feel it was useful to the country because many times when the students were supposed to be collecting tomatoes, they would instead be throwing tomatoes at each other. Mario commented on how he really felt about this form of land labor through the school system:

> I went there for fun. We really didn't like it to work the land, but once we had to go, we just tried to have fun, but the only thing that I didn't like is if you didn't get the permission to go home on the weekends, you had to stay at school because somebody watch you skipping from school or doing something wrong. On Sundays you had to go work on the land, and I didn't like that because they were making work like punishment. And I didn't agree with that. Because work is not a punishment.

Despite the land labor program, Mario said he liked studying at "el pre" because he was able to spend all the time with the same people, and "helping each other and sharing everything from a cigarette to a piece of bread. That's what I liked." Mario emphasized that the unity in Cuban schools seemed to add to the spirit of learning. He commented on his relationships with both police officers and teachers in Cuba. He said police officers are feared: ". . . the police well -- -- was your enemy. And the teacher . . . I mean there were some teachers that some of the guys would make jokes and everybody liked them, but there were teachers you just didn't like them."

Primarily all four NNS students agreed upon having positive memories of school in Cuba. In particular, they emphasized a feeling of unity among the students and shared interaction for learning. One of the recurring factors significant to these students was the bond they felt among their teachers and their peers. A possible cause of establishing a close bond with their teachers is that a few of the NNS students described how they had the same teachers for several years and, in some cases, for a variety of disciplines. Also, a possible cause of sharing a strong bond with their peers is that a few NNS students mentioned that even in the upper grades they stayed with the same class of students all day and a different teacher would rotate in their classroom after every subject taught. This was a very different scenario than the schools in Miami. All of them felt that in Cuba studies were more rigorous than in the U.S. For all of these NNS students the negative side of Cuba's school seemed to be the difficulty in taking advantage of scholarship and advancement opportunities. Many of these opportunities required attending a state run boarding school, where the students were separated from their family, and working in sugar cane fields as part the educational process.

## 4.11 School in the USA

**An essential structure of the Cuban NNS students' transcultural identities is that the students view U.S. education as a road to future opportunities.**

The next two sections concentrate on the transcultural experiences in high school and community college. Throughout the sessions, the participants provided comparative information highlighting the differences between their experiences at Goleman High or Miami-Dade Community College, and their educational experiences in Cuba. In this section, the high school NNS students provided comparative information about their transcultural experiences at Goleman High. The Cuban-American students shared their experiences of high school in the U.S., which served as cultural context for analyzing the NNS students' transcultural identities.

Yessica said that schools in the U.S. are good if a student is in Honors classes or AP classes, but she had a different opinion about mainstream classes: "I think If you are in AP classes and Honors classes, I think they're good. If you're not in those classes, I don't think you learn." Besides Barbara Goleman High School, Yessica also attended Miami Lakes Middle school. In middle school she did not speak English, and all her friends were ESOL students participating in the ESOL program. In this sense, her interaction with students was different because in high school she interacted with more students who were not in ESOL classes. Yessica said that her friendships in middle school resembled her interaction with students in Cuba. Nevertheless, she likes high school more because she claims to have more freedom, and she is learning more. Also, she has more friends in high school, and she feels like a teenager now that she is in high school. Yessica's favorite subjects at Goleman High are science and math, especially chemistry and algebra. Yessica hopes to become a dentist some day.

Yessica reiterates that the interaction with teachers at Barbara Goleman is not as close as it was in Cuba. Students in Cuba would often interact with teachers outside of class, and in many cases the teacher was very close to the family. However, Yessica claimed that the student / teacher relationship in the U.S. can become a close friendship, Yessica does, however, clarify that in the U.S. students and teachers rarely interact outside of school. I asked Yessica to describe her interaction among teachers, police officers, counselors or other authority figures at Goleman High:

> Like I said before, it's a lot different than Cuba due to the distance between them. But here, overall, I think you can form a friendship with your teachers, like I have at times. Not only are they my teachers, but they're a person that I could talk to, that I could sit and talk to. It's not like we go out together or anything or we talk off the school grounds, but at least in school we talk . . . it's not like a teacher who stands and explains, but we talk. My counselors? My counselor is Mr. _________ in school. I think he's pretty good. But I only see him when I have a problem. When I have a schedule problem or I need something or night school or something. That's the only time that I see him.

Alex shared with me his thoughts on being a student at Barbara Goleman. He described Barbara Goleman as being clean and organized. Since it is the only school he has attended in the U.S., he feels he would have to compare it to other schools to give his impressions of other schools. However, if other schools in the U.S. are like Barbara Goleman, "they are very good," he said. Alex compared Goleman High to the high school he had attended in Cuba. An obvious difference is that Goleman High is bigger, with a bigger library, which he loves. In addition, Alex commented on differences between teachers he has had here, compared to his teachers in Cuba:

> The teachers here, I don't like to say this, but a lot of teachers teach because of the money. I'm not trying to offend anyone, but that's how it is. Some teachers teach, because they like teaching, because they like working with students. But in my country, teachers don't have the benefits that teachers in this country have, so they teach because they like to teach, because they like working with kids. For that reason, I think, I like it better in Cuba, but I'm not saying (pause). . the teaching methods here are very good. I've learned a lot.

In addition, he alludes to the many possibilities he now has as a student here in the U.S. He even believes that his plans of specific engineering fields will probably change in the future, after high school. He said, "I haven't evaluated all the fields of engineering yet because I don't want to worry about that right now. I'm more focused on studying and preparing for university, but I think that, yes, in the future they will change."

Hermes believes that schools here in the U.S. have a lot of great courses that offer students the opportunity to advance if they choose to. Hermes had attended Miami Lakes Middle School before coming to Goleman High. He described some key differences between his middle school and high school experience:

> My experience tells me that middle school is more of an immature age. Children are more materialistic. They carry themselves -- -- sorry. They discriminate against other people because they are different. I expected it to be a lot stronger when I got to high school, but it was actually the opposite. People accepted other people for what they were.

At Goleman High, Hermes is very interested in computers because he really likes technology. He plans to study computer programming in the future. He would like to go to college and major in business with a minor in computer sciences. Hermes expressed an interest in different areas of the school's curriculum as well: ". . .And lately, I have also been getting into acting." He also enjoys acting, singing, and dancing. When I asked him if he believed his plans would change in the future, he responded, "No, I don't, because I already have my whole life set out for me. It's there and I really want it. And I'm there right behind it ready to achieve it."

Hermes said he has a lot of respect for teachers, counselors, and police officers. He has seen other students who don't have respect for the authority. For example, they call the police "the pigs". This is how he responds to this lack of respect:

> We're not in the 70's anymore. We're not supposed to revolt against them. They're here for our protection. Teachers, they're wonderful people. I have a lot of respect for them because it takes a lot to have guts to do what they do putting up with kids, nowadays, since they're different from before. Some kids are less respectful, but I would have to say that everybody here recognizes authority.

When Hermes described his school experiences at Goleman High, one of the ideas he focused on is that people accept other people for they who they are. He also expresses pride in his involvement with theater and extra-curricular activities. In comparison to the two NNS high school students, Hermes said he has his "whole life set out already." This is perhaps a reflection on the competitive U.S. society we live in because from the beginning Hermes has been taught in the school system that he must reach his goals in order to eventually get the job and lifestyle that he wants. Hermes describes a day at Goleman High as a rich experience with lots of student interaction:

> We usually come early. School starts at 8:25. It starts off, usually everybody's tired and cranky in the morning, but usually everybody starts getting happier around second period after the morning announcements. Third period, everybody is waiting for lunch, of course, as in typical high schools. Lunch. Everybody loves lunch, even though we are not allowed to leave the campus, everybody enjoys each other. We always get along, everybody has school spirit, and when we leave everybody's happy and can't wait to come tomorrow.

I talked to Romeo about his educational outlook. Romeo said he would like to become a P.E. teacher because he likes learning about education. He likes interacting with his peers at Goleman High, and feels he has a good relationship with his teachers. However, he does not like the high school's policy that does not allow students to leave campus for lunch. Ever since he was at Jose Marti Middle School, Romeo had been hoping to attend a high school where students were able to go out for lunch. As he remembers, "...when we were in junior high school I thought I was going to go to a school that had an outdoor campus, you know, that we can go out to eat. That's what bothers me sometimes..." He adds to this sentiment, however, that "we must all make do of our present situation." Romeo contrasts his middle school experience with his high school experience dramatically, almost as if he were a different person:

> Yeah. When I was in middle school, I was skinny. Everybody used to take away my money and stuff like that. That was middle school. And when I got here to high school, my bigger brother, after I left middle school, he was telling me that he was going to work me out. He was going to get me bigger and stronger. And I get more respect when I walk around high school and everybody knows me and I'm popular and stuff like that.

At Goleman High, Romeo's favorite subject is science, yet his least favorite subject is math. Like Hermes, he also believes his plans will not change after high school. "I don't think so. Because I have a scholarship in track. So, I would like to exceed that, and then when I'm done with the scholarship, I would like to become a P.E. teacher. So, I don't think it will change."

Since Romeo was an Afro-Cuban participant, I asked him how he felt about racism at Barbara Goleman High School and in Miami. He answered the question by stating that he identifies with being Afro-Cuban and not African-American. In regards to racism, he said "I really don't agree with it . . .most people look at me and they think I am Black American, you know. . . they look at me as a Black American and I'm a Cuban, you know." I then asked Romeo what some of his thoughts were about racism within the Cuban community and how he defines being of Cuban descent:

> Question: Among Cuban friends do you feel there is racism?
> Romeo: I really don't know, honestly. Nobody has -- -- nobody has telling me you're black, I don't know.
>
> Question: How do you define being of Cuban descent, what does that mean to you?
> Romeo: Of being of Cuban descent?
>
> Question: Of being born Cuban and raised in the U.S., but the idea of Cuban identity, what does that represent to you?
> Romeo: Being special because being Cuban, you know what I am saying I love, I love the attention that Cubans get first of all, you know what I am saying. And so, I like it, it's special. It's special.

Like Hermes, Romeo's concerns reflect many of the concerns that mainstream U.S. students are made aware of in the high school environment. For one, many of these issues about peer interaction and regulations for school lunch are issues commonly covered in a school newspaper or through the student government. Another significant point that Romeo introduces is the initiation phase he experienced from middle school to high school. This interaction phase was very similar to the NNS students' experiences when they first attended school in the U.S.—their transcultural initiation. A universal structure among Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences and Cuban-American NESS students is the initiation and transformation encountered in school settings. These are phases that are possibly encountered by many U.S. high school students in their transition from middle school to high school, possibly associated with a reaction to gang or other forms of violent incidents in U.S. schools. For the NNS students, initiation and transformation are encountered as a transcultural experience from the moment they enter the school. Finally, Romeo addresses the racial issue from an Afro-Cuban perspective. On one hand he recognizes and is proud of all dimensions of his heritage. Yet he expresses who he is within the Cuban cultural context. As he said, other students or teachers associate Romeo with being African-American, while he associates himself with being a Black Cuban-American.

*Like the participants, I also attended a public elementary, middle and high school in the U.S with the exception of the 9th and 10th grade, where I attended a private-Catholic school. During my middle and high school years, I experienced many of the emotions the participants shared with me. I could certainly relate to both Yessica's and Alex's comments on encountering some mainstream classes where they felt they were not learning a lot. I had some classes like that, but as they also mentioned, I had some classes where I had excellent teachers from whom I learned a lot and felt a sense of friendship.*

*I could also understand how Alex felt when he said that there were many opportunities in the U.S. beyond high school; however, when I was in high school I did not appreciate or value those opportunities like Alex does. Perhaps, it is because Alex did not have those same opportunities to be whatever he wanted to be in Cuba, so when he came to the U.S., he truly valued these opportunities.*

*I could identify with Romeo and Hermes when they expressed a desire for wanting to complete a career after high school. As a young boy, growing up in Miami, my parents tried very hard to instill in me a drive to "go to school." I lost a lot of the motivation by the time I was in high school, but I can understand the sense of* *individualized competition that Romeo and Hermes were raised with in Miami. The Cuban NNS students feel this sense of individualized competition in school in Miami as compared to Cuba, where they were closer to the other students. A universal structure among Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences and the Cuban-American students' experiences is the students' perceived need to select a future career. What many in their generation and my grandparents' generation were quite passionate about was that their sons and daughters become successes. This was perhaps a result of their future dreams, which were interrupted due to their immigration to the U.S.*

*I was very interested when Romeo shared with me his perspectives on color within Cuban culture. All of the NNS students interact with students from different cultural backgrounds in school. A universal structure among Cuban NNS students 'transcultural experiences and the Cuban-American students' experiences is the exposure to a multicultural society in Miami. Romeo identifies with being Cuban. His perception of race and ethnicity seems to embrace color as part of a Hispanic culture. There are other dimensions of his reality, which shape his identity within a multicultural society, such as national heritage and language. Romeo emphasizes his Cuban heritage as one of the most influential parts of his identity and identifies with being a Black Cuban that has been raised in the U.S. He has also been influenced by his Cuban-American reality in Miami. I can relate to Romeo because being Cuban is part of who I am as well as everything else that makes up my transcultural experiences, life in South Florida, school in Miami. My family and friends, my loyalty to the U.S., my interaction with students from other countries, my social and political views, my belief in God, and interacting in two languages.*

Before becoming a full-time student at Miami-Dade Community College, Liz was a student at Miami High for one year. Liz told me that at Miami High she learned a lot. Her favorite subject at the community college is math. Her least favorite subject is humanities because she is not interested in studying art, which is one of the areas they cover in her humanities class. Liz has a job on campus, which requires a lot of interaction with faculty and students. She works in an office, where she helps students who need career and college information. She also answers the phones, makes copies, and sends and receives faxes. When I asked her how she felt about having to work on campus, she answered "Yes, I love it. I love it."

Liz really enjoys school in Miami. She feels, however, that the content was more difficult in Cuba: "Schools here are so easy, you know, you don't have to talk so much... The only thing for me is the language. In Cuba, you have to study so much more; it is so like complicated. But here, for me it is so easy, I just have to learn English." However, she believes ". . .the teachers they are really good. They used other methods to teach. You know, they are more organized."

Liz's career plans have changed now that she is living in the U.S. During a career orientation class at Miami-Dade, she started thinking about becoming an elementary teacher because she loves kids. However, as she continued her studies at the community college, she started thinking she would like to become a nurse. She is especially thinking of working with newborns.

Mario started at the community college when he came to the U.S., so he has been enrolled in the ESL program at MDCC, taking only English classes. Mario is interested in studying civil engineering to improve his lifestyle. Mario said he enjoys his reading and grammar classes, but his least favorite subject is writing. He attends his college at night because he works during the day. Mario described an evening at Miami-Dade and emphasized that he enjoyed meeting people of different cultures.

> Well, I came from my job at 5:30. I got to be here. I just go to parking lot and park my car. I go to the building right where the classroom is located. . . I walk to the classes and try to talk to the people from other cultures. I love to do that when the class is all over. We go out of the classroom to talk about the subject or whatever. I get out of the school at 10 p.m. and I go to visit some friend or whatever. . . Miami you can talk to other people from other cultures. And there is no other place, places in the areas I used to go or work that makes, -- -- it's only here in the school that I can talk to the people from the Ukraine or Haiti or wherever. . .

The community college as a place where Mario experiences meeting people of different culture is part of Mario's transcultural experience. In Cuba, Mario was around other Cubans most of the time. Now, in Miami, Mario has the opportunity to interact with students from many other cultures. Perhaps these students offer Mario a way of understanding his own transcultural experiences since they are also going through a similar experience here in Miami. An underlying theme that accounts for the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences is the opportunity to meet and interact at school with peers from other cultural backgrounds.

*I can relate to Mario's sense of excitement about meeting people from different countries at the community college. When I was a student at Miami-Dade Community College, I met many students from different countries. It was also the first time that I started meeting many students from Cuba, who had been raised in Cuba, yet were now living and studying in the United States. For me meeting a Cuban from the "Cuba of today" was certainly a transcultural experience. All of the Cubans I had been raised among had been in the U.S. since the 60's, so all of my ideas had been formed by the*

*Cuban exile population of Miami. This, of course, began to change as I met people in the community college who had studied in Cuba but now were revalidating their degrees in the U.S. Interacting with Cubans my own age who had lived in Cuba almost all their life gave me an opportunity to learn more about a culture I had always been a part of, but knew only from the Miami perspective. At MDCC, I had the opportunity to spend time speaking Spanish around Cubans who had just recently arrived in the U.S. I quickly recognized their Spanish was a more fluent expression than mine was. This transcultural experience began to influence my cultural awareness of the place where I was born.*

Perhaps this kind of human, transcultural interaction, lets Mario know that other students are on the same transcultural journey. Thus, he recognizes in other students, that, like him, they are also undergoing changes that shape their transcultural identity.

Liz feels that language is the primary barrier for her at MDCC. Despite the fact she insisted that school in Cuba was harder, and she was relating it to her high school experience before she came to the U.S., she expressed that she loves going to school in the U.S. To Liz her interactions with students and staff in the classroom and at her job are a significant dimension of her transcultural experiences. Perhaps it is the dynamics of interacting in a new community and speaking a new language that invites Liz to successfully progress in developing her ESL transcultural identity.

## 4.12 Family Ties

**An essential structure of the Cuban NNS students' transcultural identities is that the students contrast family life in Cuba and the U.S.**

Family is an integral part of the culture circle that emerged as a relevant theme from my sessions with the NNS students. An essential structure of Cuban NNS students' transcultural identities is the change from more quality interaction with family to a busier lifestyle where interaction is less. The participants were enthusiastic about discussing their families, and they understand that their families play an important role in shaping their transcultural identities. For one, due to changes in work and school schedules, their interaction with their family changes. In some cases, the participants expressed that in the U.S. they spend less time interacting with their family because of time limitations. In other areas, the participants shared that their family represents a strong support system in the U.S. in order for them to undergo an easier transition from life in their native country to life in the U.S. Whether it is a positive experience or a negative one, the theme of family relations in their native country as well as in the U.S. emerges as a relevant factor in the participants' transcultural experiences.

In Cuba Yessica left behind her father's side of the family-- her grandfather, grandmother, aunt, uncle, and cousin. I asked Yessica to describe a family get together in Cuba. She began her elaborate description by stating that a family get-together was a "house event" in which she would visit her grandmother's house or her grandmother visited her:

> Oh, that used to be a house event. That was very -- -- I remember my -- -- either I visited my grandmother's house or my grandmother visited us. They used to

> come -- -- if there was a get-together, they used to get together from 10 o'clock in the morning to cook because everybody would cook together. It wasn't like they would come to eat, no. They would come with the things and they would all cook it in the house, which was going to be dined at. And they used to stay for time and time. And then all the little kids would go off to the streets and would play for the entire morning. And then when dinner was ready, we would come back, take a bath and then dine and then just spend the night in what is called sobre mesa, which is when in the same table where you ate you stayed for hours and hours just talking with a table completely full of food. Nobody would pick it up and we would just talk and talk and talk, which was a family encounter, which I love.

Similarly Liz describes family reunions in Cuba as a time where all family members get together to celebrate. She mentions that music is an essential part of family reunions: "When there is a party when someone is, you know, celebrating something, they get-together and that's pretty good, I love that. With the music, and it's you know, it's great." Liz believes there is a clear difference, however, between family reunions in Cuba and in the U.S. Liz already had some of her father's cousins living in the U.S. She describes a family reunion in Miami, as an event for which there is limited time because everyone is so busy with work and school:

> Here? In Miami, you don't have that much time to get-together. You know like family. Like in Cuba, for me, it can be different. Sometimes, many people don't have time to go any place, they are working, they are busy. And you don't see that relationship in Cuba.

Yessica already had family in the U.S.--her grandparents, aunt, and uncle, from her mother's side of the family. Yessica also supports the idea that there is little time for family get-togethers in the Miami. She has noticed that her family does not have many of those compared to Cuba:

> We don't have many of those for some reason, it's -- -- this is a country where time plays such an important role that you usually don't have time for anything. For example, I know my parents only see each other when they go to bed and on weekends because my mother works in the

> afternoon and my father works in the morning. So basically, they see each other for five minutes. And then when they come -- -- when they both come from work, I see them, because I'm usually always there, but I know that this country is a country that limits the social gathering, especially among family, because since they don't live together anymore. Because in Cuba you live a block away. Here one lives in Kendall, the other in Ft. Lauderdale, me in Miami. It's very distant for everything. You would have to get in the car, and it would take half an hour. We still get-together mostly on holidays, but it's not as it was in Cuba that we would get-together for the simple fact of getting together. It's not the same.

When it comes to a sense of close family interaction, Yessica and Liz both had similar family experiences in Cuba. They expressed a particular feeling of closeness among their family members, which was evidenced at family reunions, parties, and sitting around the table talking after dinner. Liz and Yessica describe their family interactions in Cuba with a sense of timelessness, as if no one was in a hurry and there was plenty of time to spend with each other. This, of course, changed for both of them once they arrived in Miami. Instead, they were confronted with a very busy lifestyle, watching their family running in many different directions as their own schedule started moving faster and faster. Between the rush of school and work, Liz and Yessica both found they were spending less quality time with their family.

*I often hear that in Cuba, time seems to stand still. It is difficult for me to relate to this because I have lived in the U.S. almost all my life. However, I can identify with Yessica and Liz's perception of life in the U.S. as a fast-paced lifestyle that is very difficult to fit in time for meaningful, family interaction. Even though, in my childhood, I can remember the feeling of sitting around the dinner table, with my family, there certainly came a point, especially during my teenage years, that I felt I was moving at a non-stop pace. I can definitely relate to the anxiousness of young adulthood, especially being very busy with work and college schedules, and even later when I worked as a* *department chair and teacher at several overcrowded high schools. At times, the work was spinning so fast that it was difficult to slow down and focus. I worked with some colleagues that had worked as teachers in the Cuba of today, and they expressed that the pace was slower and it was easier to focus in Cuba. Listening to Liz and Yessica influenced my transcultural identity by improving my understanding of the lifestyle in Cuba. It allows me to consider some of the critical life changes these students experience when crossing the bridge from Cuba to the U.S.*

For Romeo and Hermes family interaction was very similar to what I experienced in Miami because, like me, they have lived here almost all, if not all, of their lives. They shared these experiences with me, and these experiences served as a different perspective—one that represents the Cuban-American experiences—from which to analyze the NNS students' experiences.

Romeo does have other family members who were born in Cuba, everyone except his parents and brother. All of his family beyond his parents remain in Cuba to this day, so his family get-togethers sometimes include his nuclear family and his girlfriend's family: " . . . we meet up with my girlfriend's family, who are Colombian. And we have a lot of fun. There is a lot of dancing and chitchatting and it's everything going crazy there." Romeo has another family member who was born here in the U.S. and is married to a non-Cuban, American girl. He mentioned that he enjoys spending time with them: " . . .one of their wives is an American girl, and she's funny. I think I went twice with them to see the Marlins play, and I had a great time . . .and that's it. We haven't gone out."

Many of Hermes' family members were born in Cuba; however, now they live in the U.S. He does have some distant cousins that recently came to the U.S., but he has not really gotten to know them. His parents and grandparents live in the U.S. Hermes said his family usually has a family get-together twice a month:

> Usually, we have a family get-together twice a month, there's usually a birthday, a holiday that we usually all come together. It's usually rotated from house-to-house. It might be at my house one week, my grandmother's house the next weekend, my Aunt's or Uncle's house the next weekend. It's usually the whole family gets together. It's a big portion of my family that come from Cuba. We always stick together.

It is obvious that Hermes and Romeo do not feel the great sense of division that the other NNS students feel when they think of their family in Cuba. The NNS students are closer to their family in Cuba because part of their reality is still on the island. They experience a process of transition that encompasses both worlds at once, yet at the same time, is in the process of change that shape who they are, their transcultural identity. *A universal structure among the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences and the Cuban-American NESS students' experiences is the potentiality for connection between family in Cuba and in Miami.*

*As I listened to Romeo and Hermes describing their family interactions, it was, for me, like looking into a mirror about my own family interaction growing up in a Cuban family in Miami. Most importantly, I can connect to the idea that my parents and grandparents have been in the U.S. all along. Although I did have family in Cuba, it always felt as if they were distant family. Like Romeo and Hermes, my distant family in Cuba was not part of my reality. Sharing in the transcultural experiences of the participants has influenced my own transcultural identity because I no longer see the "Cuba of today" experience as a distant reality. Instead, it is a reality that I am* *interested in continuing to learn about because I now share a connection with the Cuban NNS students' reality.*

## 4.13 Friends Across the Ocean

**An essential structure of the Cuban NNS students' transcultural identities is that the students explore friendship in Cuba and the U.S.**

This section focuses on friends at school in Cuba and the U.S. Friends emerged as a sub-topic during the sessions with the NNS participants. I decided his theme should be explored as a separate section from the section about school in Cuba and the U.S. because the participants contributed a large quantity of information focused on their interactions with friends at school. This is an important factor in the circle of culture. An essential structure of the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences in friendship is the feeling of closeness.

Yessica told me that among her peers in Cuba it was popular to have large study groups, more than in this country. Students were accustomed to helping each other with assignments. She described a scene at her school in Cuba that portrays a cooperative learning method among friends:

> the teacher would stand up for like a half an hour. And the next -- -- like in math we wouldn't ever work alone. We would work with a group; we would interact and do everything together, like if I don't understand something you'll explain it to me and if you don't understand something I'll explain it to you or something.

Alex also illustrated how he felt when interacting with other students in Cuba. He described it as a nice and friendly feeling. Alex felt very comfortable with the students because he was in the same classroom with the same students all periods. He explained, "We were the same students. The same class we took history, math, Spanish, geography, biology, the same subjects and the same class, not like here with separate and we go to different classes. He commented that staying in the same class with students, ". . .brings a very comfortable situation when surrounded by students."

I asked Alex to describe a party or social event where friends get-together in Cuba. Alex described it as a place where people share their emotions. Alex said there is a lot of communication at a party. People share their experiences at a social gathering. Although he compares the Cuban scenario with a description of a party or social event where friends get-together here in Miami. He emphasized the similarities: "After school, my friends and I used to gather and dance, practice dancing La Rueda. I feel comfortable with those friends pretty much. Like in Cuba we keep the same, customs, and we share our experiences during the day and during class."

Mario's experience among students in Cuba also emphasized this concept of togetherness. Mario spoke of his friends in schools as if they were his brothers. When he described his friendships I could tell that these were people he felt close to, perhaps even most of his life:

> If they were my classmates, I feel like if it were all brothers, because we sleep together, we went to the land together, we went to study together, we went to dance together, we went everywhere together. They were my brothers. And we still write each other. Probably with other people that they weren't from my classroom, it was like "oh, you're from another classroom and mine is the best," . . .

Liz's response also supports this idea that in Cuba you build a feeling of unity with students at school because, as she says, ". . . since the first grade you go all the years, you know, first, second, and up to high school with the same people."

This quality of feeling close to friends in school becomes an important factor in the NNS students' transcultural experiences. Once they arrive in the U.S., they have already established a foundation for close interaction with other students because of their previous experiences in Cuba. Their background experience serves as a context for interacting with new friends in the U.S. I asked the NNS students to share these experiences of interacting with school friends in the U.S.

Most of Yessica's friends here in the U.S. are students who came from Cuba as teenagers, like she did. She does, however, have one friend who was born in the U.S., but whose parents are Cuban. She described him as a wonderful person. Yessica said he's a likable student, who is very smart, although at times he does not think like the students who are born in Cuba:

> The difference is he's less into the Cuban humor, that's basically it. I don't know why. For example, when we make a joke or something, he usually doesn't get it, because -- -- and it's quite obvious why, because we grew in a place where -- -- Cuban is a person, who is energetic, who is always laughing, always making jokes. Humor is a very important thing in our life. We grew among that. We grew within that environment, the environment of fun. But he didn't. And usually we're making continuous jokes or something, and he usually steps out a little bit, because at times, I think he can't keep up, but then I think he can, because he does. But you can tell how he struggles, because he doesn't really at times understand or he can come up with the jokes. I don't know, I see him with a less -- -- the humor that we have is not as abundant in him. And that's a big difference.

Yessica highlights some of the differences among her relationships with the students at Goleman High School compared to the students in Cuba. It seems to her that in a school as large as Goleman, she connects herself to smaller groups within classes instead of connecting to the entire class:

> In this school, in my classes at least, there is a little group. Among the classes, in the entire classes, within the class there's a little group a little group of your friends, and basically, that's all you interact. And you don't really get much out

> of it, and that wasn't like that in Cuba. In Cuba, it was the entire classroom. . . in this country, it's the little group of friends and from there you interact. It's only your little friends; it's not the entire class.

I asked Yessica if she believes she would change if most of her friends were students who had lived in the U.S. all of their lives. She described why it would change her because it would give her more "American" qualities:

> That would change me greatly, because I would acquire most, not most, but I would acquire American qualities. Disregarding the influence of my parents and my family, which is always going to be Cuban, Cuban descent, I think that because I am influenced so much by my friends, because they are the people that I see continuous and daily, I think I will change, because I would acquire their interests, because they are the persons who I go out with. They're the persons who I talk to who I share ideas with and sooner or later you're going to be influenced by those ideas or you're going to influence them. But I think if it's a majority, you're going to be influenced. And maybe at least that's why I haven't changed so much by my Cuban ways, because most of my friends are Cuban. I don't really have many American, that have persons that have lived in the U.S. for a long time as very close friends.

Alex agrees with Yessica's statement about Cuban sense of humor. He comments that even though Cubans on the island ". . .are oppressed and they are controlled, they keep this sense of humor, which like it drives them away from their problems and lets them live within that dictatorship that they have in Cuba." Alex also has friends who are Cuban born in the U.S. His best friend is Cuban-American, and she was born here. Alex said the major difference between him and her is that he she speaks English very well. According to Alex, their personalities are alike, however. Alex describes her as one of the people who helped him to adjust to the U.S.:

> She's very humoristic, peaceful, and helpful when I need her. And she's kind of like a counselor for me, because she has helped me here. When I arrived, I didn't know anything about this country. She was the one who taught me and introduced me to this country.

I asked Alex if they ever exchange ideas about his childhood in Cuba and her childhood here in Miami. He said they often do. He has learned that in Cuba there was a safer feeling for children as compared to the U.S. As a young boy in Cuba, he was able to safely visit friends on his own, while in the U.S. her parents were fearful of the high crime rate in Miami. They talk about their childhood sense of freedom, how he was able to "visit any friend without the fear that someone is going to steal us or anything like that, which she wasn't able to do here when she was little."

> Some of them, they keep that tradition. They say, "No. I'm Cuban." But others are like, "No, I am American, because I was born here." But their parents were Cuban and they don't, you know, they don't care like their parents aren't Cuban. "No. I'm American because I was born here". And in reality their parents are Cuban and they don't feel like they are from there.

Mario emphasizes that one of the most important aspects oh his interactions with other students at the community college are that he is interested in learning about their background: "I feel interested in knowing, what is their past, where they come from . . . and interested in their culture." Although Mario does have friends in college, he considers them "friends from college" because he does not have the same bond with them as closer friends. He does, however, know about twenty people at the college who have attended school with Mario in Cuba. In this sense, he feels he has a lot of friends at the college. I asked Mario to describe his impression of a Cuban-American student here in the United States, a person who was born here, but whose parents are Cuban:

> **Question:** What's the difference?
>
> **Mario:** They -- -- what I see the most is the gangs. When we were in Cuba we just tried to, "hay there's that girl," let's try to date that girl or something. And here when you go to some club and you see the gangs

> trying to pressure. That's nonsense the war we are fighting each other or having guns and stuff like that and try to get some girl to have fun and go out. That's it. That's how we were in Cuba.

Mario, Alex, and Yessica all emphasize the argument that in Cuban schools interaction among friends is close, emphasizing a feeling of trust and lightheartedness among their peers. An underlying theme that accounts for the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences is a sense of humor and innocent-like quality among other Cuban NNS peers. Humor seems to be a characteristic that defines interaction among youth in the anecdotes shared by the NNS participants. In particular, when Mario compares the interaction among friends in Cuba and friends in the U.S., he clarifies that in Cuba peers were more interested in hanging-out with girls and just having innocent fun, always humorous joking being part of the activity. Here in the U.S., however, he emphasizes that fun for many teenagers means being a part of a gang or using drugs. Mario said it is much more common to see young people exposed to these types of social problems here in the U.S. than in Cuba.

Alex shared his thoughts about his transcultural experience of coming in contact with a Cuban-American girl in Miami, who became his friend and mentor. This was a wonderful experience for him as he gained a better understanding of her childhood in Miami. By develop a close relationship with her, this experience broadened his perspectives of a reality different from his own. In this sense, Alex's experience represents the quintessential transcultural experience since it shapes his development as a person. His relationship with this Cuban-American student enriches his understanding of the Cuban-American reality, allowing him to further define his transcultural identity.

Yessica shares a similar experience to bringing in a Cuban-American student into her circle of friends, who are primarily NNS students. Remarkably, she defines the difference between the group of Cuban NNS students and the Cuban-American student as possessing a more serious nature, while the Cuban NNS students are more open and less reserved about laughing, joking, and having a good time as a way of life. She mentions that sometimes, she senses the humor is too much for the Cuban American student. Perhaps, the Cuban-American student feels uncomfortable because he notices a difference in the interaction among the Cuban NNS students and his other more "Americanized" friends.

*As a teacher of both ESOL and mainstream students, I have also observed in my Cuban NNS students closer interactions as compared to the Cuba-American NESS students. I remember, as a teenager, sensing a difference between my grandparents' generation and my own in terms of this Cuban sense of humor that the participants have touched upon during the sessions. My grandparents always seemed to be able to solve life's problems with a sense of humor, and laugher was a common thread around my grandparents' house. Although I also sensed this sense of humor among my friends, who were Cuban-American, there was a clear difference that we had more cynicism in our ways of interacting and were less interested in just enjoying our own company and innocently having a good time. I can especially relate this to my own transcultural experience when I became an ESOL teacher for Miami-Dade County Public schools. There I sensed the same sense of humor and light-hearted manner that I had as a child witnessed in my grandparents' generations, but now I was witnessing it in the interaction among my Cuban ESOL students as well.*

*I have learned a lot about myself as a human being as I interact with a culture that was once closed off to me, but is now reawakened in who I am. What have I learned? For one, I have seen in myself a desire to connect with my students' educational needs. Thus, I have been able to become a better teacher for them. I have recognized that for me to know what my students need, I must look inside myself and connect myself to their ESOL transcultural identity. I must ask myself, "Who are they in relation to where they have come from, were they are, and where they are going, all within the context of the ESL culture circle? This is the essence of the transcultural experience that changes us forever.*

Romeo and Hermes have different perspectives than the Cuban NNS students about interaction with students at Goleman High, yet there is a common ground for both groups. The sessions with Romeo and Hermes offer a wonderful context of mainstream student interaction at Goleman High from the perspectives of Cuban-American students. In Romeo's case he does not have close friends who recently came from Cuba because he feels he has not had the opportunity to make friends who have recently come from Cuba. Hermes has, however, had the opportunity in some of his Spanish Literature to come in contact with students who have recently arrived from Cuba or have been here for several years, but would be considered NNS students. His interaction with Cuban NNS students has sparked in him a curiosity about the difference between Cuban-American culture and the world they left behind in Cuba.

Romeo does not have friends at Goleman High who recently left Cuba. He does, however, have a friend who is Cuban, but raised here in the U.S. like himself. Romeo described his friend and their relationship: "He's cool. He's Cuban too, you know. He's

-- -- well, he's my twin. He is the same thing like me. We are always going out. . . .we are always doing jokes. We are always hanging out." Although Romeo has not had the opportunity to become close friends with someone who recently came from Cuba, he says he has observed some differences among students, like himself, who were born or raised in the U.S. versus students who were born and raised in Cuba. Romeo described the differences between someone like himself, who was raised here in the U.S. and a student who was born and raised in Cuba:

> The main difference is their way of acting, you know what I'm saying, because since me I've been here for a long time, and every year there's -- --there's something special that goes on in school. And they come here for a certain time and we have, for example, a prom. And they haven't gone to a prom. . . And I know how to act at a prom, but they don't know how to act at a prom. And that's the -- -- that's the main cool thing about it. You know what I'm saying? And not only that, at a pep rally, too. You know what I'm saying. They don't know how to act at a pep rally. You know. They think since they are so locked down, you know, they think they have a certain way of having fun, but everybody else knows that. We can do this and that because we have been here for a longer period of time. That's it.

Unlike Romeo, Hermes has friends at Goleman High who arrived from Cuba in the past five years. He describes his experience with getting to know them at school: "A few of my friends who just came very recently, and I've gotten very close with them, and they talk a lot about Cuba, and I've learned a lot from them." Hermes also has friends at Goleman High, such as his best friend, whose mother is Cuban and father is Italian. Hermes described his relationship with her:

> My best friend's, her mother's Cuban, and her father's Italian. We get along very well. At first, we started dating, but then I found out that she has a child, and I told her I wasn't comfortable with that, so it ended up that we became best friends, and we've gotten along very well. We're inseparable. Usually, when she has boyfriends, she has to tell them that, you know, I have a best friend and it's a

> male. She's like my sister to me. I can tell her anything, and she can tell me anything. We get along very well.

Both Hermes and Romeo introduced interesting dimensions to the Cuban NNS students' versus the Cuban-American NESS students' differences. Romeo mentioned an interesting point that supports the ESL transcultural identity process as a transition process manifested in NNS students' cultural behavior when they first arrive in the U.S. (i.e., are not quite sure how to act in school functions, such as proms and pep rallies). Furthermore, Hermes focused on his interaction with the Cuban NNS students as a learning experience. This is the reciprocal nature of the transcultural process, where the NNS students' peers also re-evaluate their interpretation of native Cuban culture. In this sense, by interacting with the Cuban NNS students, the Cuban-American students also experience the transcultural process through their curiosity about the NNS students' reality. A universal structure among the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences and the Cuban-American students' transcultural experiences is the process of learning about each other's culture.

*I have been thinking about my interaction among NNS students in middle school and high school. This time period was the mid to late 1970's and 1980, which was the year of the Mariel Exodus. Before Mariel, of course, it was very difficult to interact with Cuban NNS students who had just recently left Cuba because there were very few who left Cuba throughout the 1970's. Thus, I really did not know any students who were approximately my age and had just recently left Cuba. Like Hermes and Romeo, many of my Cuban friends back then were either born in the U.S. or, like me, born in Cuba and had lived here all of their lives. My meaningful interaction with Cuban from the island culture came in the mid to late 1980's at the university and then in the 1990's as a middle school and high school teacher. During this time, I not only started interacting with* *colleagues that had recently left Cuba and shared with me their experiences of living under a communist government. Years ago some had been convinced it was the way, yet now, as I listened to them, they seemed to be convinced that the government's repression was a violation of free speech as a basic human right. Here, I could think of the NNS participants I interviewed and could understand their balance of on one hand, loving their native country, and even missing the people they shared real human bonds with, apart from politics, yet hoping in different possibilities for Cuba's government. My contextual framework for analyzing the Cuban experience broadened, and I began to recognize my own transcultural experience as integral to my transcultural identity. It was not until I began to close on my own cultural circle that I began to gain a deeper, more meaningful perspective of my own transcultural identity. For me this gave me a better understanding of my students' past, present, and future vision.*

## 4.14 Socio-political Visions

**An essential structure of the Cuban NNS students' transcultural identities is that the students focus on freedom of speech.**

As part of a qualitative study, I do not believe that I can isolate one dimension of human beings' lives without considering its integral part to the whole cultural circle. Thus, when discussing the emergence of political issues as central to the NNS students' transcultural experience it is significant to note that politics are, in essence, integral and inseparable to the transcultural circle and to Cuban society as a whole. In this section, I will discuss the sociopolitical topics that emerged from the session with the Cuban NNS students and the Cuban-American students. An essential structure of Cuban NNS students' transcultural identities is the issue of freedom of speech. The themes that emerge as significant to the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences are the issues of freedom of speech in Cuba, freedom of speech in American classrooms, the role of the teenager in the U.S., visions of Cuba for the future, and visions of Miami in the future. This became a central issue that held their attention for elaboration and discussion. This section also incorporates the participants' future visions of life in Cuba and life in Miami.

*As I interviewed the students, I quickly realized that the topic of Cuba, even simply asking the students to describe Cuba, invited political commentary from some of them. The topics of Cuba and politics are, it appears, inseparable to the participants since these students and their families see politics as one of the central reasons why they have left Cuba. This reality is true for earlier immigrant generations, such as Hermes' parents in the 60's and Romeo's parents in the 80's. I find it difficult to discuss the topic of Cuba without attempting to explore political dimensions central to my own transcultural experiences of why my parents brought me to the U.S. Like the students, politics are at the heart of my family's immigration from the island. I see the topic of Cuban politics as a metaphorical device for continuously redefining my own transcultural experience, as well as better understanding my students' transcultural identity.*

Romeo told me he really did not have too many friends who had recently arrived from Cuba. When I asked him the question "Do you feel there is freedom in Cuba?" he answered, "No." I was interested in knowing why he felt that way if he really had not talked to students who had lived and studied in Cuba. He responded that he believed there was no freedom in Cuba. I asked him, "Why not?" to get an idea of his perspectives on the issue. He answered, "Because Fidel Castro, all this stuff going on with Fidel Castro and the United States. It's -- -- it's dictatorship, you know, and no freedom there at all."

Romeo, who has lived in the U.S. most of his life, agreed that the U.S. is a country where students' opinions should be respected. However, he explores another side to this complex issue of freedom -- "Do students have a right to exploit "freedom" despite their effect on others?" Romeo commented on this topic of freedom from the perspective of other students' rights:

> **Questions:** In the U.S., many people agree that students should have the right to freely express their ideas, like in class, what do you think about this?
> **Romeo:** I really don't know, because it depends if -- -- if a student expresses his feelings in the wrong way, it might hurt somebody, you know what I am saying, it probably wouldn't be a good idea, you know, but instead of that, I guess there is no problem with that.

Nevertheless, Romeo expressed a desire to live in Cuba someday if there were political changes, as opposed to just visiting Cuba. I asked him about his future vision of life in Miami and in Cuba, and then asked him where he would prefer to live:

> **Question:** Would you like to live in Miami then, or if you had the opportunity to go back to a free and democratic Cuba, would you go back?
> **Romeo:** Yes. I would go back.
> **Question:** Would you like to live there or just visit?
> **Romeo:** No. I would like to live there and I wouldn't even hesitate.
> **Question:** Why?
> **Romeo:** Because like I said before that's, that's where I was born at. I would like to live where I was born at, you know. I would like to, to experience what, what my fathers and my -- -- and I mean what my father and my mom had been through. I would like to see where they -- what high school they went through, you know. I want to be there. I would love to see that!

Romeo describes the ways he feels about the future of Cuba with enthusiasm. First, he says he hopes Fidel Castro would no longer be the president of Cuba: "I want -- -- I would love for Fidel to leave already." Romeo's dream is to go to Cuba, where he said, "And we can help, we can all go there and help each other out. You know, help each individual family out for it can look like a beautiful, a beautiful place."

Hermes, who was born and raised in the U.S., synchronizes the idea of being Cuban and American. He defines what it means to him to be Cuban and what it means to him to be American:

> **Question:** How do you define being an American?
> **Hermes:** I think it's great being an American. A few weeks ago, I was thinking in Spanish class some kids were talking about how things in Cuba were different. It was sad that I couldn't enjoy their heritage or my heritage like the way they did, but I thought it over and I'm pretty proud to be an American citizen, an American.
> **Question:** How do you define being of Cuban descent?
> **Hermes:** I would have to say it's kind of sad that you're not considered Cuban and you're not considered American, you're thrown in the middle, but you have the American culture and you also have the Cuban culture, so you have double of what everybody else has.

Hermes expressed that there are differences among Cubans born and raised in the U.S. and Cuban NNS students. He focused on the difference of lifestyle and the fact that many Cuban-American students have had a lot of materialistic comforts all their lives, as opposed to the Cuban students, who did not have a lot of these "creature comforts."

> **Question:** Do you believe there's a difference or how do you describe the difference between a Cuban-American student born here, and some of the people that you know who were raised in Cuba and recently left, and are now here as students?
>
> **Hermes:** I would say that there is because the Cuban-American students have had their whole lives and they don't understand what it is to suffer in Cuba, and the Cuban students know what they have gone through, and they've lived in Cuba. And for here, this is like a heaven for them, because they have all these things over here that they have never had before.

Hermes has a more distant view of Cuba, although he does feel he would like to visit someday: He hopes that Cuba will be rebuilt someday, and he points out that this might require the help of other countries: ". . .maybe to go back to what it was, and I heard it was a very popular country, very beautiful, maybe restoration of some kind for Cuba." Nevertheless, Hermes would like to spend the rest of his life in the U.S.:

> **Question:** Would you like to spend the rest of your life in the U.S., or would you like to live in another country?
> **Hermes:** I would prefer to live in the U.S. the rest of my life because it's a very -- -- because of the freedom here and the liberty to do whatever we feel. If I want to move to California, I could if I wanted, if I wanted to move to New York I could. And it's very -- -- it has a variety of ranges of where I could live if I wanted to live in the metropolis, If I wanted to live in a little town, I could. So, there is a wide variety of places I could live here.

*During the sessions with Romeo and Hermes I thought a lot about the question of whether I would ever return to Cuba to visit or live for an extended period of time. It is a difficult question, except to say that I would love to visit where I was born someday, and in a sense, I guess I am revisiting my own cultural roots as part of the process of this research paper. I honestly believe that I am very similar to Hermes and Romeo in the sense that I have lived as they have lived. I have always had a strong sense of knowing what being Cuban is all about, growing up in South Florida in the midst of the Cuban Exodus. Yes, I would like to visit Cuba if the present government ever changed. I do not the Cuban government as I trust the democratic system in the U.S., and like, Romeo and Hermes, I believe that the Cuban people are repressed in terms of freedom of speech. I also recognize that in the U.S. we have our share of problems, prejudices, abuses, crimes, and drugs, but above it all is the seed of democracy, and I believe that for all human* *beings, regardless of color, gender, handicap, or sexual orientation, the seed continues to grow. My hope is that one day Cuba will experience the same democracy.*

Romeo and Hermes offer a reference point for better understanding the transcultural experience of knowing that even though they have lived in this country almost all their lives, like all Americans, they have a cultural heritage that can be traced to other generations. For them, in particular, their cultural heritage is influenced by life for Cuban-Americans in Miami, which has preserved many of the cultural characteristics of Cuban heritage in exile. Both of them have expressed an interest in their cultural heritage in various ways beyond their connection and influence of their families. Romeo is interested in living in Cuba some day, should Cuba become a democratic society. His reasoning for this is to get in touch with his cultural heritage. Hermes explained that he only wants to visit Cuba, and of course, only if it is a democratic society. Hoping that Cuba changes from its present government to a democratic society like the United States, is important to the Cuban NNS students and the Cuban-American NESS students. A universal structure among the Cuban NNS students transcultural experiences and the Cuban-American NESS students experiences is a hope for a future Cuba that embraces free-speech and democracy…Another interesting aspect raised by Hermes was how he defines being a Cuban-American within sociopolitical context. He has embraced the idea of his Cuban culture within the framework of American democratic philosophy. This is very important to Hermes because having freedom of speech is part of defining who he is as a person.

Alex has not returned to Cuba, even to visit, since moving to the U.S. Alex is clear about the idea that him and his family have come to the U.S. for freedom. When I asked him the question, "Do you feel there is freedom in Cuba?" his response was a quiet, sincere, "No, sir, I don't." Alex described how in Cuba people are not allowed to express their opinions: "There's limitations and there's regulations that you have to follow, and you can't say nothing that might be interpreted as criticizing the government and anything like that." Then when I asked Alex if he believes there is freedom in the U.S., he answered, "Yes, I do totally . . .Because you can expose your decision before events and before decisions you can express your ideas without the fear that someone is going to tell you, no you can't say that."

Alex shared with me his opinion on American classrooms, where students are encouraged to express their ideas in the classroom freely. Alex said he totally agrees with this educational philosophy because ". . .students are the ones that could propose ideas that could benefit them, dealing with education and teaching." I asked Alex what he thought about teachers or students who publicly question and criticize the president, even the government, Alex said, "Well, I think that's part of the freedom of speech. I think there's nothing wrong with that."

Alex describes being a teenager within a Cuban-American community in the U.S. Alex says, "Teenagers here, as part of this Cuban-American community, relates to his classmates, shares his views of life, and all that's based on my personal experience." I asked Alex to describe some of the ways teenagers feel about religion in Cuba. He described that since Castro had banned religion in Cuba, it's been eliminated from the Cuban people's customs: "Most teenagers refuse to attend churches, and they don't think that there's a God, and that there's a greater being." Then I asked him how feels about religion or has it changed since he has been living in the U.S. Alex answered that his views have not changed, although he does believe in a higher power:

> No, it hasn't changed. Actually, I don't attend any churches or visit any churches. I am not religious, but I know there has to be something greater than us. We're not the only beings in the universe, there has to be something else. And I personally believe that if there's a God, I could reach him by myself. I don't think it has to be through any church, or any priest, or anyone.

Then I asked him how he envisions Miami in the future, and he responded that the Miami of tomorrow depends on what happens in Cuba. "Why?" I asked him. Alex believes that if the situation in Cuba improves, most of the Cubans who live in Miami would go back to Cuba: "There's going to be an all-American population again if that happens." Alex thinks that most of the Cubans who came to the U.S. when they were younger, would want to go back, . . . "The ones I know, at least the ones I know, they want to go back if the situation improves."

Alex described his vision of Cuba in the future, although he has decided to live in the U.S. and visit Cuba someday:

If President Castro is not -- -- if the country doesn't get a democracy, it doesn't practice democracy, it is going to be the same as it is now. . . I would like to go back to Cuba some day, but only for visiting reasons. I don't want to live my life there. . .I'd have to evaluate how well life in Cuba is going to be.

Like Alex, Yessica does not feel there is freedom in Cuba. Her reasons also mirror that the ". . .government restricts you too much." She not only feels that the government restricts you on what you say and do, but also what to think. She contrasts her views of freedom, which differ between Cuba and the U.S.:

> Not only does he restrict you on what to say and what to do, but what to think. He restricts your way of thinking to the point that most of them are communist, most of them have turned communist, not because they want to, but because it's the most convenient thing. It's the most convenient to live good, you know, to give your family what they need. I don't think that you're able to express yourself, what you really believe, in Cuba . . . I feel freedom in the U.S., because you are able to say what you believe and

> do what you wish even if you pay the consequences afterwards. And I like the U.S. because of that, because they allow you to do something, you just have to pay the consequences. But you're free to do what you want and then you do it and then you pay.

I asked Yessica to define the word freedom: "What does the word 'freedom' mean to you?"

> When I say freedom, basically, I mean freedom to me is freedom of expression and freedom of action because I associate a human being with a person who can decide for himself, a person who can make his or her own decisions. Actions and freedom means to me to be able to do what I think is right and what I believe.

Yessica supports the idea of freedom of speech in the classroom and views U.S. classrooms as an example of that type of freedom:

> **Question:** In the U.S. many people agree that students should have the right to freely express their ideas? What do you think about this?
> **Yessica:** I think it is completely and entirely right. Because not only because we are students, but we are free because the United States is a free country, and we must have freedom of expression. And I completely agree with that. Not only must you be allowed to freely express your feelings by hand and by writing but also by word because if you feel something you say it. You pay the consequences, but you say it.
> **Question:** In the U.S. some students and teachers publicly question and criticize the government, even the President. What do you think about this?
> **Yessica:** I agree with it to some extent. I agree with you expressing your own beliefs, but I think that if you're in a class with students, students, who learn so much not only what they teach, but what they see, I don't think you should be that rebellious because you might teach the student that this is right, and it's not right. Its right to express your opinions, but it is not right to form a revolt or criticize everything. It's okay to express your feelings, but it's not okay to teach to all the students, because the students, especially the children, and I'm a children, I truly believe so, we try to imitate everything, and we see this all the time. Soon enough, we're going to start doing it all the time. So basically, I agree with expressing all you can see, but I don't know if I would agree with the continuous criticizing of the government to the point of students making fun of other students.

Yessica does not believe that students in Cuba have the same rights to express their feelings as students here in the U.S.:

> **Question:** Do you feel the students in Cuba have the same rights to express their feelings freely?
> **Yessica:** No. Because in Cuba most of the teachers -- --not most of them, but an amount, a great amount of teachers are communist. At the beginning of the school year if they see that you're not with the government they hate you completely and they hate you automatically. And they try to sink you so much because -- -- and when they see that you're smart and you're not with the government they detest you and they always try to sink you. And there's a big -- -- Cuba in the school, it's a little bit like a prison and all you do is study, but you have to study what they tell you. You can't even pick your own career. That's the career that comes and they don't let you pick. Everything is so regulated and in classes you can't say what you think because you have to say what is allowed. You can't ever say what you think.

I asked Yessica to share her thoughts on religion. She expressed that many years ago in Cuba, Fidel Castro eliminated religion. Yessica, likewise, alluded to the "red handkerchief" that separated students from the religious world:

> I never grew into a religion ever. In fact, in my school if they saw me go in, because we had una pañoleta (scarf) you couldn't go in with that into a church, because that would mean you were -- -- in Cuba you were un pionero, which was like a student . . . And you would have una pañoleta, you couldn't go like that into a church. If you went like that that would mean that you are not a pioneer anymore. You're like a traitor. So, they sort of like established that church and school are like completely against each other. Of course, the students reject church and that's why I don't think -- -- most of my friends which I have here which have -- -- grew up in Cuba with the same time -- --(tape finished side one) So, that's why basically not many students of our age that have come from Cuba share religion, because basically, it was prohibited during the time that we grew. And usually the time -- -- something that you don't grow with is something that you don't really get to love ever, and you don't get to really feel. And that's why most of us, we don't really -- -- we're not inclined towards religion . . .I consider myself who believes in God, but not a person who believes in religion.

Yessica explained her perceptions on the ways teenagers in Miami feel about sex. Her impression is that do teenagers view as a priority. This bothers Yessica. Yessica considers herself the type of person ". . . who likes to live a stage, and I'm very for living the stage in life that you are entitled to do so. For example, if you're a teenager, you live the stage as a teenager. And if you're a child, you live the stage of a child." Yessica believes that many teenagers in this country "do not live their stage" because while they are teenagers, they no longer want to be a teenager; instead they are too quick to want to move on to another stage:

> They want to be a woman. And then they want to get married and have a child, and then they don't want it anymore. Once they have it, they don't want it. And I just don't understand why they have to rush into life so much. Why don't they just can't wait? And I do feel that sex in this country is a priority. And in the surroundings which I live, I think that it is a priority. But not just a priority, but it's incredible. They don't even know anybody. You meet a guy, you met him for two days. " I know him already. It's time." And I just don't understand how that could be, how you could do something, which in my opinion is so sacred with just anybody.

Yessica expressed that there are similarities between Cubans in Cuba and Cubans in the U.S. Yessica sees some similarity among the way parents raise their children, such as "They raised their kids as if they lived in Cuba." Yessica had the opportunity to visit her extended family in Cuba last year. I asked Yessica to share with me her impressions of her visit last year:

> **Question:** What was your impression when you went back last year? How did you feel when you first got there?
>
> **Yessica:** It was very different in those four years that I hadn't gone to Cuba, it changed dramatically. It went from bad, really bad, to worse, really, really worse! You see the little kids begging for a dollar in the airport. You see them all trying to carry your bags in order for you to give them fifty cents. It's incredible what he has done to the country. It's incredible to see how many families long to see the ones here, because they have separated. It's really sad.

Yessica describes her vision of Cuba in the future by stating first, that "Hopefully communism will end." However, she emphasizes that it is difficult for her to believe it anymore because she ". . .believed it for so long and it hasn't happened, that I don't know if I believe communism will end." She believes that by the time communism does end, "Cuba is going to be a catastrophe, complete chaos. . .it's going to take a couple of years to settle." Yessica declares that she doesn't see ". . .a future for Cuba, not at this point."

I asked Yessica if she would like to spend the rest of her life in the U.S. or would she like to go back to Cuba some day. She answered, "No, I don't think I'll go back to Cuba, because I know I'm going to study in this country." She envisions herself at forty, and the reality of becoming acculturated in an American society:

> And sooner or later, when I'm forty years old and I look back, most of my life is going to have been lived in the U.S., and I'm going to have lived here for thirty years. I think that I would wish for my family to come from Cuba to be with them. But no I don't think I'll go back to Cuba.

Liz has similar feelings about the intrusion of the Cuban government on people's freedom of expression. On this topic of whether or not there is freedom in Cuba, Liz remarked, "Because in Cuba you can't say things about the government, for example, you can't do whatever you want to do, you have to do whatever they say." Like the other, she also feels, however, that there is freedom in the U.S:

> **Question**: In the U.S. many people agree that students have the right to freely express their ideas. What do you think about this?
> **Liz**: I think it is true, it is a good idea to express, you know, our opinion about something.

Liz describes being a teenager here in Miami as a "good" experience that requires one "to grow up." She differentiates between living as a teenager in Cuba and living in the U.S. Liz emphasizes that for teenagers coming to the U.S. it is important to adjust:

> **Question**: Adjust?

> **Liz:** Adjust to the rules here. Even though you can enjoy, but you have to work and you have to, you know, other things you have to do.

Liz remembers that as a young second-grade student in Cuba, she felt pressured to never enter a church: "Yes. Sometimes for me, when I was in the second grade, I was like with a group of friends and we got inside the church, but we couldn't go. We have like red handkerchiefs and if you were a student you could not go." Now, in Miami, Liz chooses to attend church, and she emphasizes, "Me, for example, now I'm going because I changed, and you know I can say that."

I asked Mario to comment on the freedom with which many people associate American education, especially the idea that students and teachers can participate in criticizing the U.S. government. He answered this question in the context of the Marxist philosophy that permeates the Cuban communist system:

> **Question:** What do you think about the idea that many people in a class might have very different points of view about government?
> **Mario:** It's fine, because in Cuba they try, I don't know how many Cubans were in Cuba, 11 million people thinking one way, that's impossible.

In Cuba, Mario used to go to church on a weekly basis. He started attending church from the age of one. He said there was always a church to go to, although many families and priests were ordered to leave the island: "There were people who were separated at that time because they get fear or they were scared by the several institutions that Castro created. And they were coming back in the '90s, a lot of people were coming back to the church." I asked Mario if he ever talked to a priest for any kind of advice or counseling. He said that in the church he used to go to there was one priest they used to call "Pepe." Mario described him as someone whose warmth seemed to attract young people's attention: "He was like 63 years old or something like that, but he has like charm to attract young people and he was a very nice person to talk to." Mario elaborated on how he believes many young people feel about religion in Cuba:

> **Question:** What are your impressions of how Cuban teenagers feel about religion?
> **Mario:** Perhaps the only thing they had was their grandmother, who still remained with this idea of religion, but a lot of parents, they were young, they got scared, so they didn't teach any religion or type of freedom or something, so they didn't care about it, but I think they feel attracted to something. Each time that there was a Christmas in Cuba, the young people went into the church to see the tree. And how do you call those peoples?
> **Question:** The nativity?
> **Mario:** The nativity. They feel attracted in some way. They feel that something was missing. That something wasn't taught to them or something.

Mario said that in Cuba students also have the right to express their ideas, "as long as they don't bend or criticize the government." He described the secretive way other students criticized the government, "Not out loud, only as a comment between students." Alex also emphasized the students did not comment in front of the teacher, just amongst the students. Mario shared with me an anecdote about a college friend in Cuba who challenged the teacher by using the teacher's own argument to argue with the teacher about a minority social issue:

> **Mario:** There was -- -- this is a friend of mine who was in the university and they were in the philosophy class or Marxism class. . . There was a teacher saying that the Latinos here in Miami, they weren't treated well. . . this teacher when he didn't know the answer he used to say, well we have to do an investigation about that. And this friend of mine asked permission to talk and she gave it to him and he said not everybody in the U.S. is a boxer and the values of a boxer is different from the values of other people. A boxer just thinking punching and stuff like that. And there are Latinos in the U.S, who are doctors and lawyers. And the teacher said not every Latino is a doctor or a lawyer in the U.S. and he said, well, we have to make an investigation about that. . .begins laughing and stuff like that. We just try in classes in philosophy or Marxism, we just try to have fun and laugh about what the teacher was saying.

At Miami-Dade Community College, Mario comes in contact and interacts with Cuban students that were raised in Cuba, as well as students who were raised in the U.S. I asked him to describe the difference:

> **Question:** Do you think there is any cultural difference between Cubans in Cuba and Cubans in the U.S. who have lived here all their lives? Describe the difference.
>
> **Mario:** What do you mean by cultural?
>
> **Question:** Do you think that they are different in their ways of thinking, in their values, in their behavior, anything that you might think is different?
>
> **Mario:** There's a difference. People who -- -- I have two uncles and they're uncles of my father that came here in the 60s, something like that. And there's a lot of people that came in the 60s, but the people who are coming now, it was because they were coming with the communist system . . .They have different values, because it is not the same way as living here as in Cuba . . .Well, perhaps, they feel they had a lot of problems when they came here. It wasn't the same to come to the U.S. in the 60s, but now it's a lot easier and they have to work a lot and they suffer a lot because there wasn't the equal amount of people that speak Spanish. So they really had to work hard to get all of what they have today. And they (newer immigrants) see people who came just two months ago and they have a car and they're going on easier.

Mario discussed his vision of Cuba in the future. His main concern was that someday there might be a civil war, most probably between communists and dissident citizens. He believes a civil unrest would be a very negative scenario for the future of Cuba. As Mario speaks of it, "Brothers fighting each other," fighting in the same homeland:

> **Question:** Describe your vision of Cuba in the future. How do you see that? In your eyes, what's going to happen there?
>
> **Mario:** I just hope that there won't be a civil war because that's the worst thing that can happen to that country. Brothers fighting each other. I don't know if we stop living under Castro and take him out of Cuba. . . Because if you kick him out of Cuba, he already won. It's not my vision. it's the

> way I want it to be, because I can see Cuba in ten years. And I don't see it. I guess it's the way I want it to be. And it's people progressing and the civil -- my friends that are the civil engineers creating an doing their -- -- the planning that they feel -- -- realize themselves. That they are not working for nothing or because there's no employment, and they have to go agriculture or something like that.

*I have learned a lot from listening to Mario, Yessica, Liz, and Alex. All of them seem to have such rich complex perspectives about these sociopolitical issues. Some of their views are motifs that string together the essential philosophies underlying their views on these issues. Like so many Cubans, it is obvious they want change for Cuba. Mario was very expressive about not wanting to see an eventual civil war in Cuba. I agree with that. Hopefully, it would be a peaceful transition to a democratic system. Yessica mentioned that students should be able to have the freedom to speak their mind in class, and I know that is a freedom I always took for granted being educated in the U.S. Today I value this freedom more and more, especially when I hear the participant's stories and the intensity in which they value their freedom of speech in a classroom where they did not have it before.*

## 4.15 Development and Description of a Model

This section presents a model representing an interpretive construction of the participants' cultural perspectives as they relate to ESOL transcultural identity and teaching literature. As it has been mentioned earlier in Chapter 3, given the purpose of explaining the essential structures of four Cuban, non-native English-speaking students' (NNS) transcultural identities, this study is guided by the philosophical tenets of reader response theory. Thus, the development of the model is primarily grounded in reader response theory, which includes the following tenets: 1) A text does not have meaning until it is read by a reader; 2) The reader, with whatever experience he or she brings to the text, creates the text; 3) In literary interpretation, the text is not the most important component; the reader is; 4) There is no text unless there is a reader; 5) The reader is the only one who can say what the text is; 6) The reader creates the text as much as the author does; 7) Critics should concentrate on the reader and the reading process, the interaction that takes place between the reader and the text (Guerin, Labor, Morgan, Reesman, and Willingham, 1992).

Each component of the model was designed from major themes that emerged from the interview data by using a thematic analysis method rooted in reader response theory. The model is formulated and grounded on the participants' transcultural experiences as a whole, including the experiences of the two NESS students, who were used to gain further insight into the Miami Cuban-American experience. Furthermore, the model serves to give shape to the central theoretical framework that makes up the results and pedagogical implications of the study, and it is guided by the exploratory questions of this study (See Diagram 10).

In addition to the nine major themes, secondary themes, guided by the exploratory subquestions, emerged from the interview data as well. The nine major categories emerging from the central question and the secondary themes are the following:

**Central Exploratory Question:**

**From the perspective of four Cuban, non-native English-speaking students (NNS), what are the essential structures of their transcultural identities?**

The following are essential structures of the Cuban NNS students' transcultural identities (See Chart 3):

I. **Portrait of a Country:** The students preserve mental pictures of their homeland.

II. **Personal Memories:** The students value special moments in Cuba.

III. **Discovering America:** The students alter their perceptions of the U.S.

IV. **Living in Miami:** The students differentiate between life in Cuba and Miami.

V. **An Education in Cuba:** The students hold dual perspectives on Cuba's schools.

VI. **School in the USA:** The students view U.S. education as a road to future opportunities.

VII. **Family Ties:** The students contrast family life in Cuba and the U.S.

VIII. **Friends Across the Ocean:** The students explore friendship in Cuba and the U.S.

IX. **Socio-political Visions:** The students focus on freedom of speech.

**Exploratory Subquestion 1:**

**What are the underlying themes that account for the Cuban NNS students' ` transcultural experiences?**

The following are some underlying themes that account for the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences (See Chart 4):

I. The students expressed a strong desire to describe the cities where they were born to include the people and lifestyles.

II. The students shared favorite memories in Cuba of belonging with family and friends.

III. The students had to confront a new reality once they arrive in the U.S.

IV. The students felt at home in Miami, yet nostalgic of places in Cuba.

V. The students hold education in Cuba is more rigorous, but in the U.S. there is more opportunities.

VI. The students view U.S. believe that U.S. schools provide opportunities for new jobs, careers, and peer relations.

VII. The students experience a change from family relations in Cuba to family relations in the U.S.

VIII. The students see their friendships in Cuba and with other Cuban NNS students in the U.S. characterized by a humorous, innocent quality.

IX. The students believe the U.S. is a country that grants personal, educational, and social freedoms.

Chart 4

# Exploratory Subquestion I:

*What are the underlying themes that account for the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences?*

| *The following are underlying themes that account for the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences:* | |
|---|---|
| I. **Portrait of a Country:** | The students express a strong desire to describe the cities where they were born, to include the people and lifestyles. |
| II. **Personal Memories:** | The students share favorite memories of belonging with family and friends. |
| III. **Discovering America:** | The students confront a new reality once they arrive in the U.S. |
| IV. **Living in Miami:** | The students feel at home in Miami, yet nostalgic of places in Cuba. |
| V. **An Education in Cuba:** | The students hold education in Cuba as more rigorous, but education in the U.S. as offering more opportunities. |
| VI. **School in the USA:** | The students believe that U.S. schools provide opportunities for new jobs, careers, and peer relations. |
| VII. **Family Ties:** | The students experience a change from family relations in Cuba to family relations in the U.S. |
| VIII. **Friends Across the Ocean:** | The students see their friendships in Cuba and with other Cuban NNS students in the U.S. as characterized by a humorous, innocent–like quality. |
| IX. **Socio–political Visions:** | The students believe the U.S. is a country that grants personal, educational, and social freedoms. |

**Exploratory Subquestion 2:**

**What are the universal structures among the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences and the Cuban-American NESS students' experiences?**

The following are universal structures among the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences and the Cuban-American NESS students' experiences (See Chart 5):

IV. Both groups live in bilingual, bicultural communities.

V. Both groups perceive a need to select and pursue future careers.

VI. Both groups interact with friends from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

VII. Both groups possess the potentiality for connection between family in Cuba and in Miami.

VIII. Both groups experience learning about each others' cultures.

IX. Both groups preserve hope for a future Cuba that embraces free speech and democracy.

Chart 5

---

# Exploratory Subquestion 2:

*What are universal structures among the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences and the Cuban-American NESS students' experiences?*

| *The following are universal structures among the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences and the Cuban-American NESS students.' experiences:* | |
|---|---|
| **IV. Living in Miami:** | Both groups live in bilingual, bicultural communities. |
| **V. An Education in Cuba:** | Both groups perceive a need to select and pursue future careers. |
| **VI. School in the USA:** | Both groups interact with friends from a variety of cultural backgrounds. |
| **VII. Family Ties:** | Both groups possess the potentiality for connection between family in Cuba and in Miami. |
| **VIII. Friends Across the Ocean:** | Both groups experience learning about each others' cultures. |
| **IX. Socio–political Visions:** | Both groups preserve hope for a future Cuba that embraces free-speech and democracy. |

**Exploratory Subquestion 3:**

**What are the projected structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented in his or her transcultural experiences?**

The following are projected structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented by their transcultural experiences. **These projected structural meanings serve as potential connections to literature for the Cuban NNS students:** (See Diagrams 1 – 9).

**I. Portrait of a Country:** The students preserve mental pictures of their homeland.

1. Name important landmarks in Cuba.
2. List some of the significant dates in Cuban history.
3. Describe the lifestyle in Cuba. Has it changed in the past 10 – 20 years? From what you know of Cuban history, has the lifestyle changed in Cuba in the past 60 Years? How?
4. Examine the changes in Cuban politics since its independence from Spain.
5. Who have been some of the famous Cuban leaders before and after the Communist Revolution? Analyze their positive and/or negative influence on Cuba.
6. Discuss a typical day of life in Cuba.
7. Illustrate a Cuban landscape. How would you describe what Cuba looks like to someone who has never been there?
8. Explain how you felt when you were in Cuba?

**II. Personal Memories:** The students value special moments in Cuba.

1. Tell about a special moment in Cuba.
2. Describe your favorite childhood memory in Cuba.
3. Where did you spend your most memorable times in Cuba?

**III. Discovering America:** The students alter their perceptions of the U.S.

1. Describe how you pictured the U.S. before you arrived.
2. Examine your ideas of the U.S. while you still lived in Cuba.
3. Compare and/or Contrast your ideas of the U.S. before you arrived and your ideas after you arrived.
4. Differentiate between the way people talked about the U.S. in Cuba and your impressions of the U.S. today.
5. Analyze your ideas of going to school and making friends in the U.S. while you still lived in Cuba and your ideas of going to school and making friends in the U.S. today.
6. What if you had never come to the U.S.? How would you be picturing the U.S. if you still lived in Cuba?
7. Recommend coming to the U.S. to a friend in Cuba. How would you describe life in the U.S. to your friend?

**IV. Living in Miami:** The students differentiate between life in Cuba and Miami.

1. Show the differences between life in Cuba and life in Miami.
2. Contrast favorite activities in Cuba and favorite activities in Miami.
3. Compare life in Cuba to life in Miami.

4. What if you could choose to have the best of both worlds, Cuba and the U.S.? Describe what type of country it would be.

**V. An Education in Cuba:** The students hold dual perspectives on Cuba's schools.

1. Describe a day in a Cuban school.
2. What were some of the most important things you learned while attending school in Cuba.
3. Discuss some of the negative aspects, if any, of attending school in Cuba.
4. Analyze the negative and positive characteristics of attending schools in Cuba.

**VI. School in the USA:** The students view U.S. education as a road to future opportunities.

1. Now that you attend school in Miami, describe a day in school.
2. Compare and/or Contrast attending school in Cuba and the U.S.
3. Summarize some of the positive characteristics of attending school in the U.S.
4. Examine some of the negative aspects of attending school in the U.S.
5. What can you predict for your future after community college (or high school)?

**VII. Family Ties:** The students contrast family life in Cuba and the U.S.

1. Describe your family relationships in Cuba.
2. Describe your family relationships in the U.S.
3. Contrast the quality time you spent with your family while in Cuba and while in the U.S.

4. Compare / Contrast the kinds of relationships you had with your family in Cuba versus the U.S.
5. Evaluate changes in your relationships with your family since you have been in the U.S.

**VIII. Friends Across the Ocean:** The students explore friendship in Cuba and the U.S.

1. Describe your relationships with your friends in Cuba.
2. Describe your relationships with your friends in the U.S.
3. Compare / Contrast the kind of relationships you had with your friends in Cuba and the U.S.
4. Evaluate changes in your relationships with your friends since you have been in the U.S.

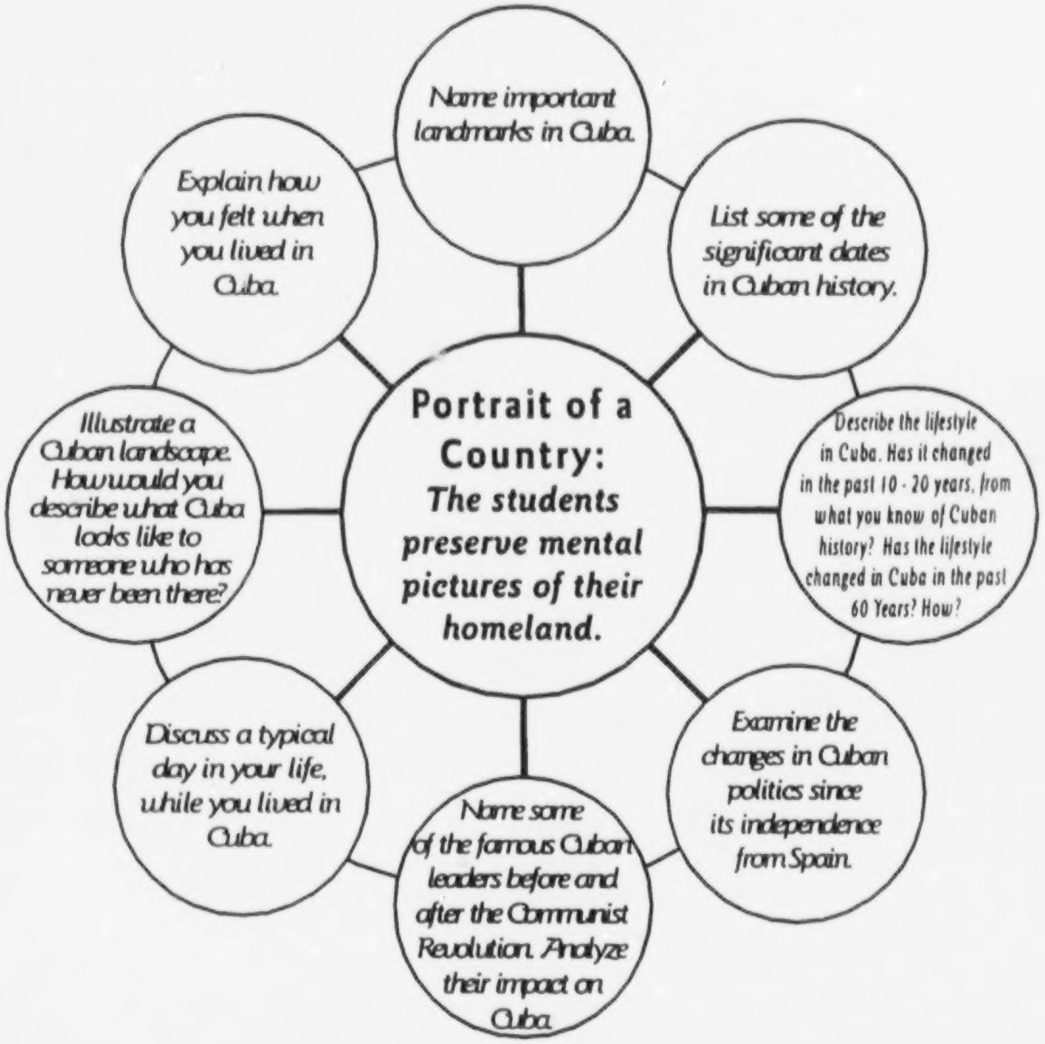
**IX. Socio-political Visions:** The students focus on freedom of speech in the U.S.

1. Define the word "freedom." What does it mean to you?
2. Discuss the reasons why you and/or your family came to the U.S.
3. Compare and/or Contrast freedom of expression in Cuban classrooms to freedom of expression in the U.S.

Diagram I

## Exploratory Subquestion 3:

***What are the projected structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented by their transcultural experiences?***



**Portrait of a Country:** ***The students preserve mental pictures of their homeland.***

*Name important landmarks in Cuba.*

*List some of the significant dates in Cuban history.*

Describe the lifestyle in Cuba. Has it changed in the past 10 - 20 years, from what you know of Cuban history? Has the lifestyle changed in Cuba in the past 60 Years? How?

*Examine the changes in Cuban politics since its independence from Spain.*

*Name some of the famous Cuban leaders before and after the Communist Revolution. Analyze their impact on Cuba.*

*Discuss a typical day in your life, while you lived in Cuba.*

*Illustrate a Cuban landscape. How would you describe what Cuba looks like to someone who has never been there?*

*Explain how you felt when you lived in Cuba.*

**Cuban NNS students' projected topics of interests**

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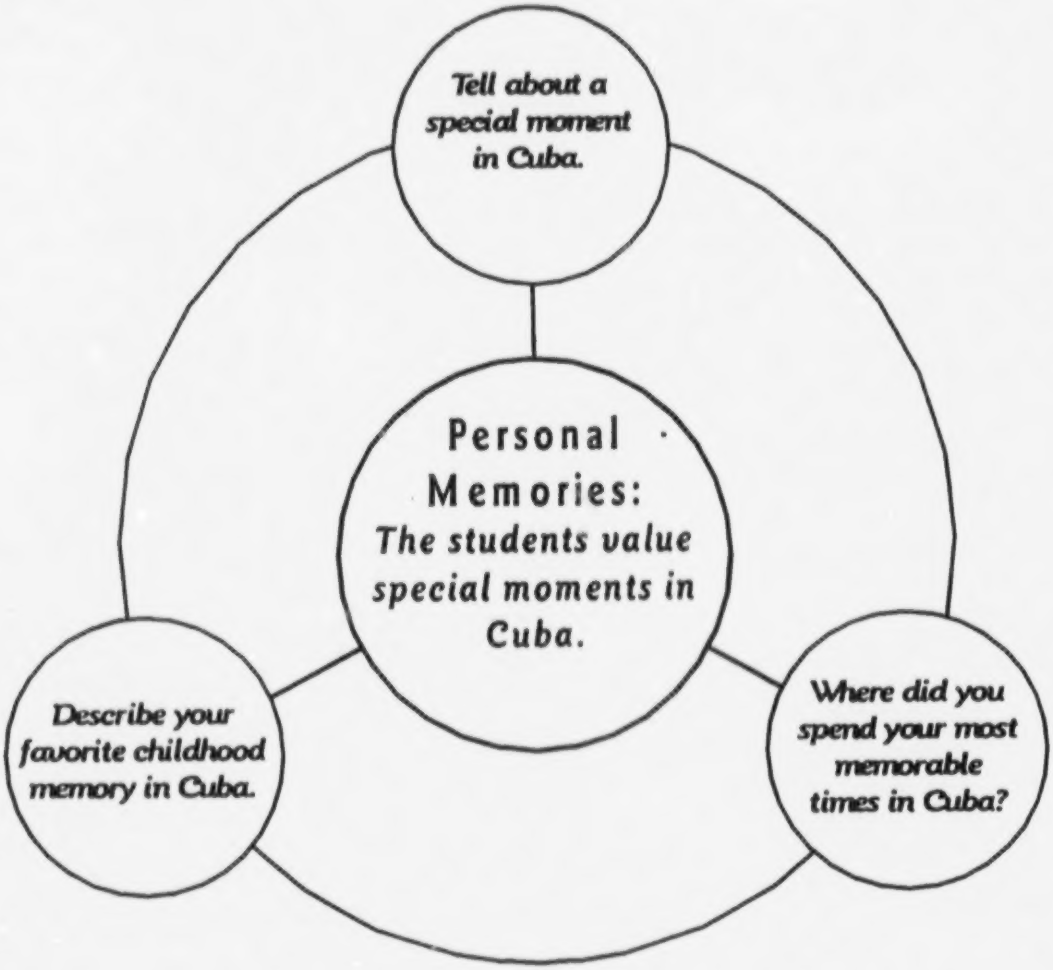
# Exploratory Subquestion 3:

***What are the projected structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented by their transcultural experiences?***

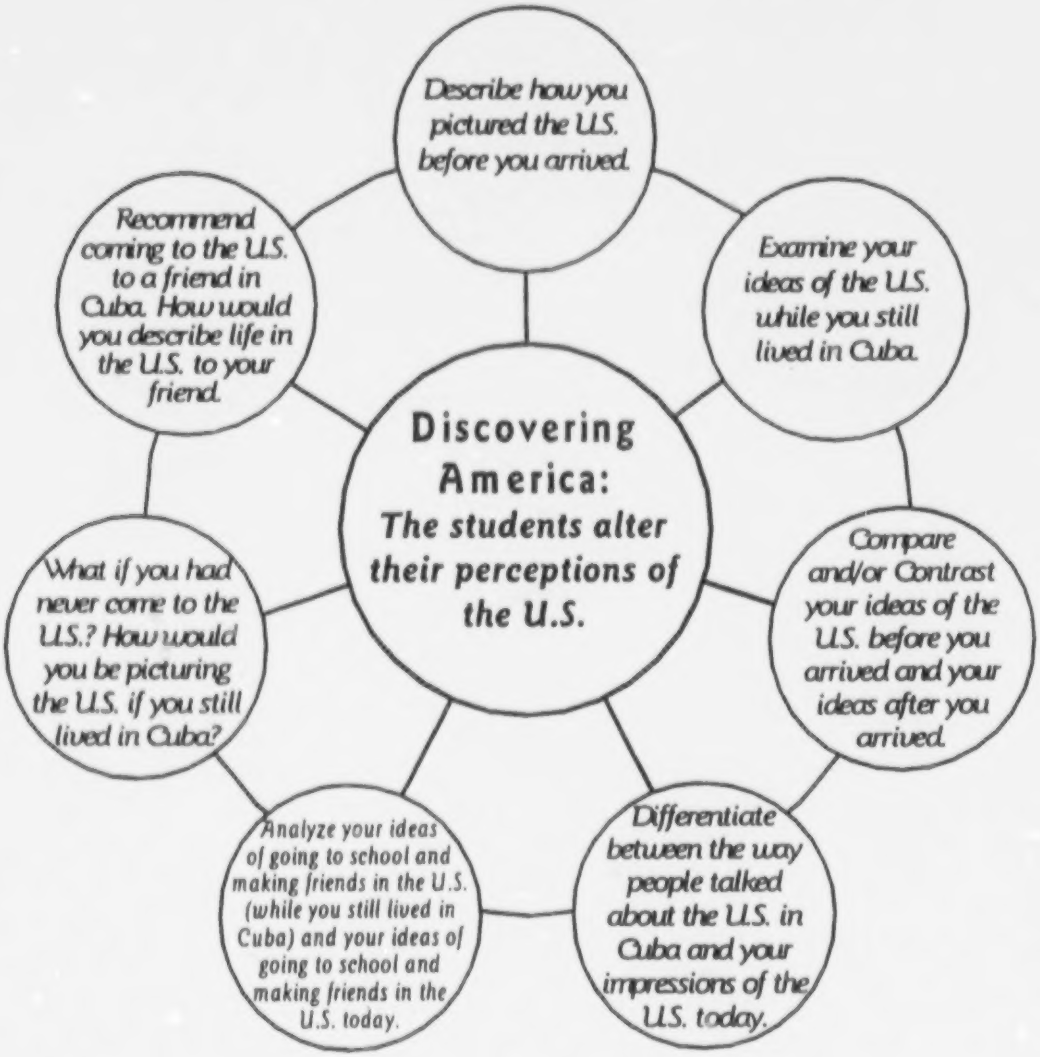

Tell about a special moment in Cuba.
Personal Memories:
The students value special moments in Cuba.
Describe your favorite childhood memory in Cuba.
Where did you spend your most memorable times in Cuba?

**Cuban NNS students' projected topics of interests**

Diagram 3

# Exploratory Subquestion 3:

***What are the projected structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented by their transcultural experiences?***

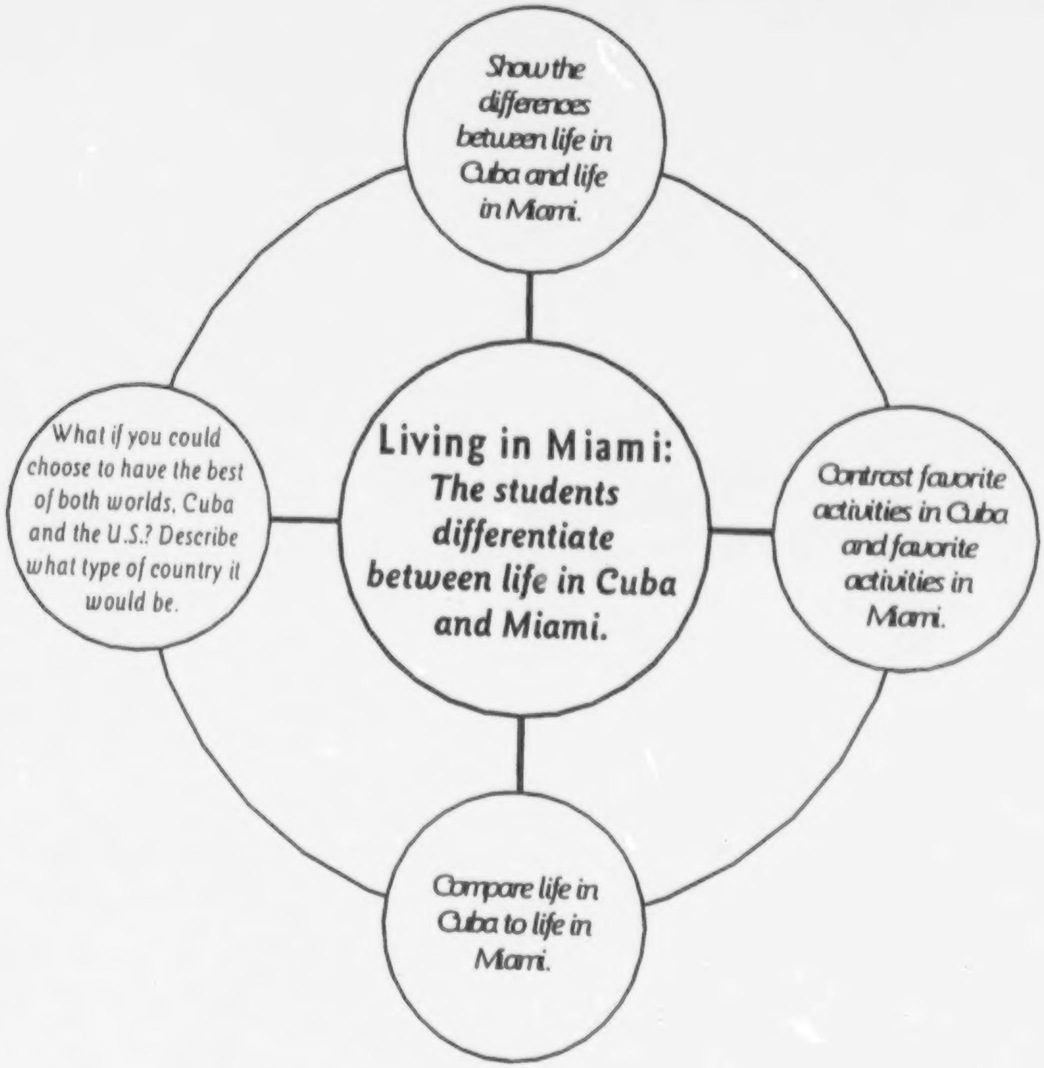

Discovering America: The students alter their perceptions of the U.S.
Describe how you pictured the U.S. before you arrived.
Examine your ideas of the U.S. while you still lived in Cuba.
Compare and/or Contrast your ideas of the U.S. before you arrived and your ideas after you arrived.
Differentiate between the way people talked about the U.S. in Cuba and your impressions of the U.S. today.
Analyze your ideas of going to school and making friends in the U.S. (while you still lived in Cuba) and your ideas of going to school and making friends in the U.S. today.
What if you had never come to the U.S.? How would you be picturing the U.S. if you still lived in Cuba?
Recommend coming to the U.S. to a friend in Cuba. How would you describe life in the U.S. to your friend.

**Cuban NNS students' projected topics of interests**

Diagram 4

# Exploratory Subquestion 3:

***What are the projected structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented by their transcultural experiences?***

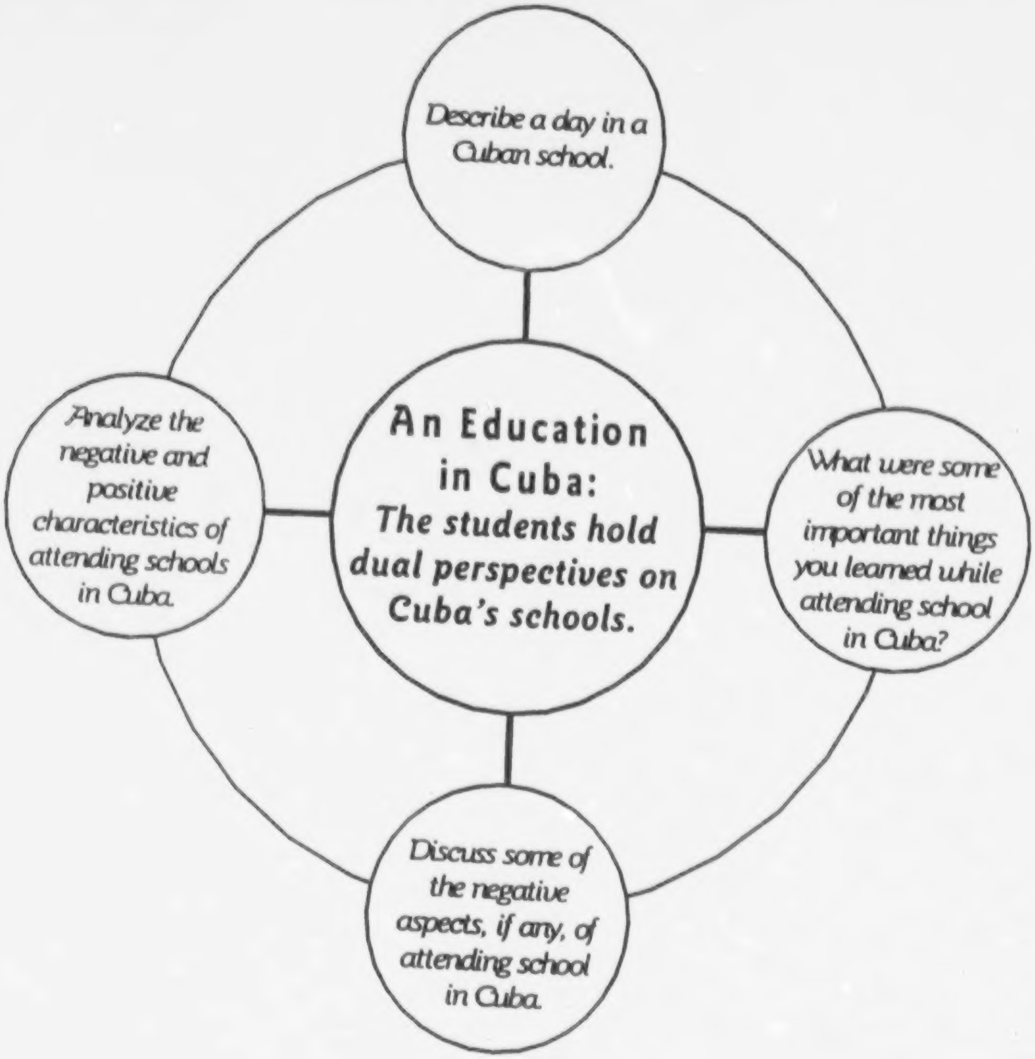

Show the differences between life in Cuba and life in Miami.
What if you could choose to have the best of both worlds, Cuba and the U.S.? Describe what type of country it would be.
Living in Miami: The students differentiate between life in Cuba and Miami.
Contrast favorite activities in Cuba and favorite activities in Miami.
Compare life in Cuba to life in Miami.

**Cuban NNS students' projected topics of interests**

Diagram 5

# Exploratory Subquestion 3:

***What are the projected structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented by their transcultural experiences?***

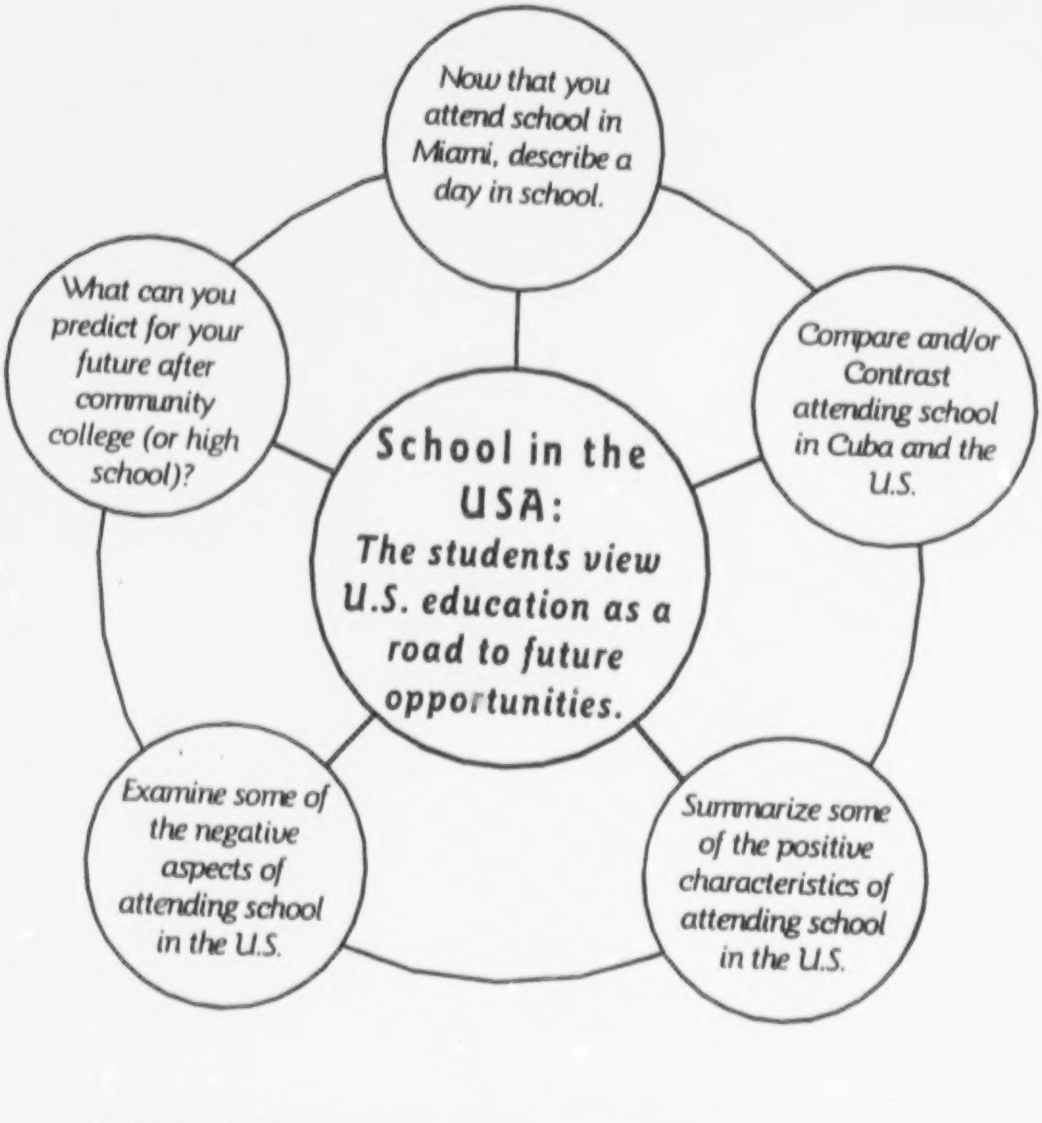

Describe a day in a Cuban school.
Analyze the negative and positive characteristics of attending schools in Cuba.
An Education in Cuba: The students hold dual perspectives on Cuba's schools.
What were some of the most important things you learned while attending school in Cuba?
Discuss some of the negative aspects, if any, of attending school in Cuba.

**Cuban NNS students' projected topics of interests**

Diagram 6

# Exploratory Subquestion 3:

***What are the projected structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented by their transcultural experiences?***

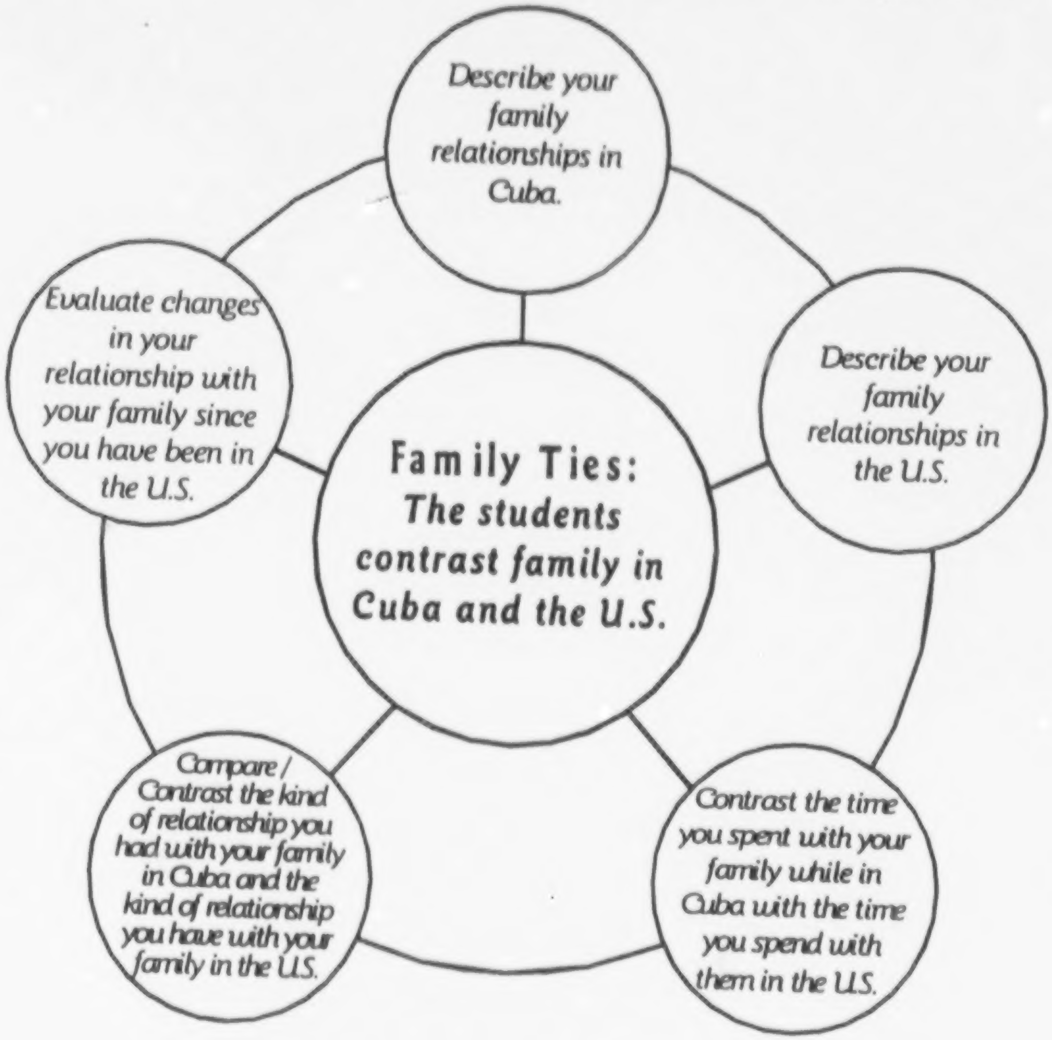

Now that you attend school in Miami, describe a day in school.
What can you predict for your future after community college (or high school)?
Compare and/or Contrast attending school in Cuba and the U.S.
School in the USA: The students view U.S. education as a road to future opportunities.
Examine some of the negative aspects of attending school in the U.S.
Summarize some of the positive characteristics of attending school in the U.S.

**Cuban NNS students' projected topics of interests**

Diagram 7

## Exploratory Subquestion 3:

***What are the projected structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented by their transcultural experiences?***

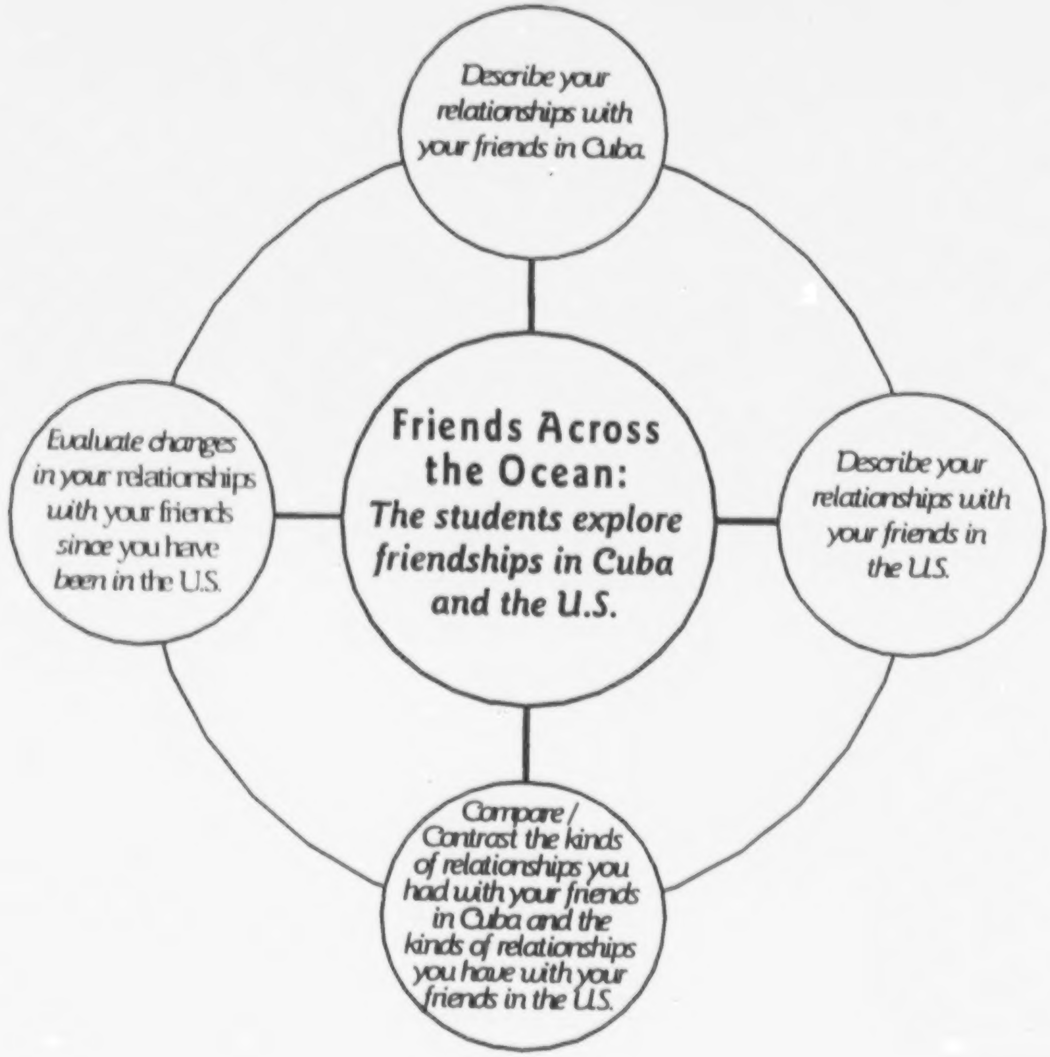

Describe your family relationships in Cuba.
Describe your family relationships in the U.S.
Contrast the time you spent with your family while in Cuba with the time you spend with them in the U.S.
Compare / Contrast the kind of relationship you had with your family in Cuba and the kind of relationship you have with your family in the U.S.
Evaluate changes in your relationship with your family since you have been in the U.S.
Family Ties: The students contrast family in Cuba and the U.S.

**Cuban NNS students' projected topics of interests**

Diagram 8

## Exploratory Subquestion 3:

***What are the projected structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented by their transcultural experiences?***

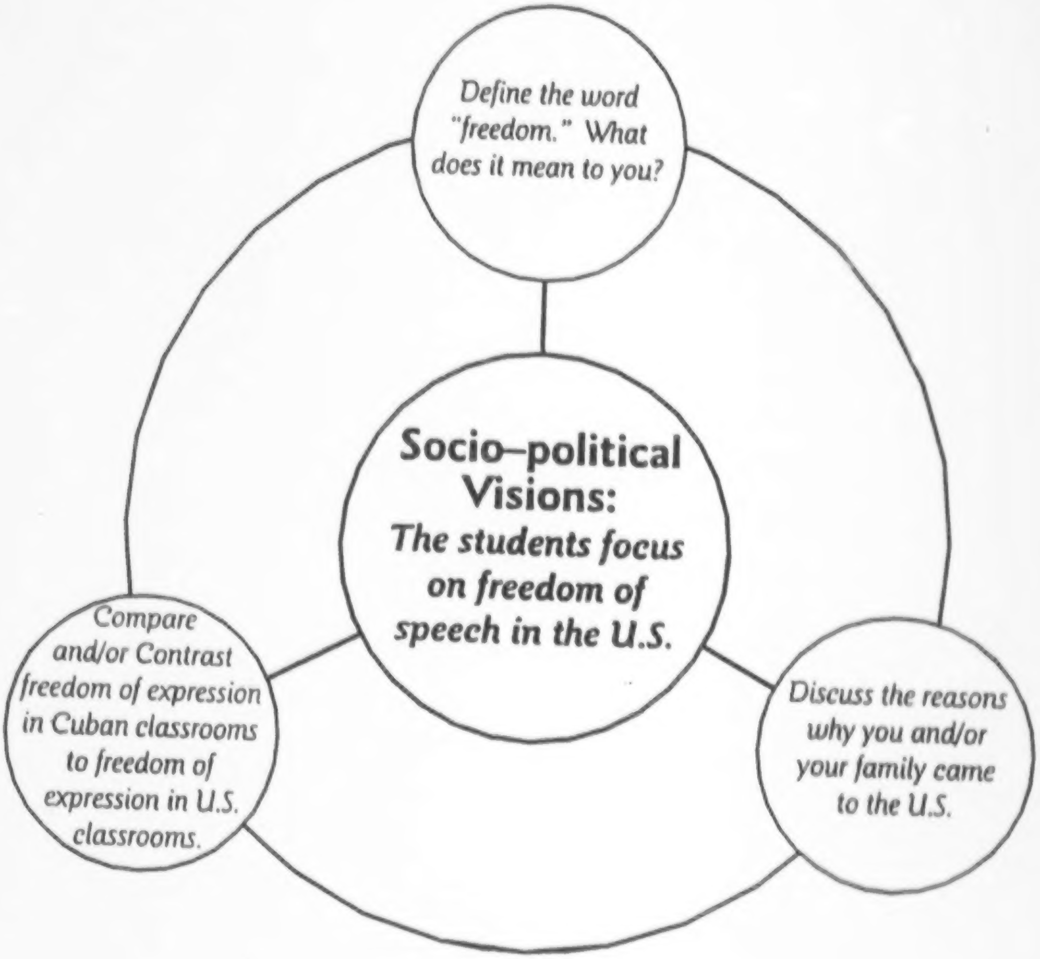

Describe your relationships with your friends in Cuba.
Friends Across the Ocean:
The students explore friendships in Cuba and the U.S.
Evaluate changes in your relationships with your friends since you have been in the U.S.
Describe your relationships with your friends in the U.S.
Compare / Contrast the kinds of relationships you had with your friends in Cuba and the kinds of relationships you have with your friends in the U.S.

**Cuban NNS students' projected topics of interests**

Diagram 9

# Exploratory Subquestion 3:

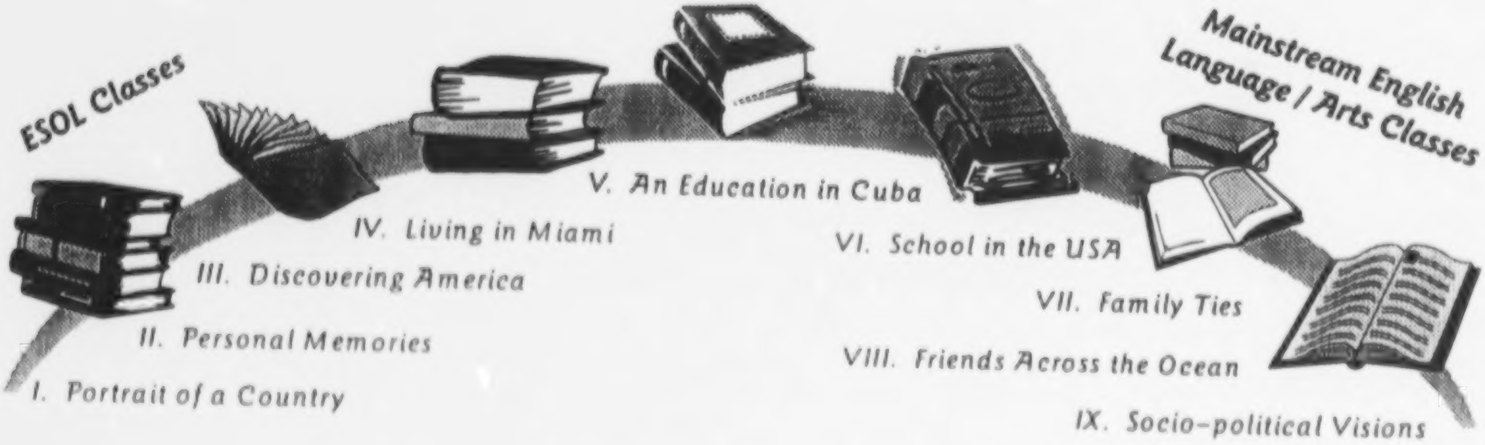
***What are the projected structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented by their transcultural experiences?***


Define the word "freedom." What does it mean to you?
Socio–political Visions: The students focus on freedom of speech in the U.S.
Compare and/or Contrast freedom of expression in Cuban classrooms to freedom of expression in U.S. classrooms.
Discuss the reasons why you and/or your family came to the U.S.

**Cuban NNS students' projected topics of interests**

Diagram 10

# A Model for Cuban NNS Students' Transcultural Identities



ESOL Classes

Mainstream English Language / Arts Classes

I. Portrait of a Country

II. Personal Memories

III. Discovering America

IV. Living in Miami

V. An Education in Cuba

VI. School in the USA

VII. Family Ties

VIII. Friends Across the Ocean

IX. Socio-political Visions

## Perspectives of Sacrifice and Rebirth in the Transcultural Journey of the Cuban NNS Students

# CHAPTER FIVE

# DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to draw conclusions from the data presented in Chapter Four and explore the pedagogical implications of the data in the context of teaching literature in the advanced ESOL classroom. Conclusions proposed from this qualitative study have emerged from a close examination of the unique transcultural experiences of four Cuban NNS students and two Cuban-American NESS students. Thus, any conclusions drawn can only be applied to these six students' transcultural experiences. I believe, however, that the value of these conclusions can potentially serve as a model for TESOL researchers and practitioners in the ESOL classroom. In addition, as a practitioner / researcher, I can use this methodology to investigate the transcultural experiences of ESOL students from a variety of cultures, and consider each student's unique transcultural identity in making connections to selecting and teaching literature in my ESOL classroom.

## 5.2 Discussion: Multicultural Textbooks for the ESOL Classroom

The art of teaching literature provides a stage for tapping into student interests. In this sense, the structural meanings identified for the Cuban NNS students can serve as a bridge between their unique interests and selected texts. In the next two sections, I will present and analyze selected works from the most current American literature anthology, Language and Literature by McDougal-Littell (Bernstein, 1994), adopted by MDCPS' high school ESOL departments for the 1999-2000 school year. In addition, I will present and analyze a selected piece from the current reading anthology, A Writer's Workbook (Smoke, 1996.), used in the advanced ESOL composition classes at MDCC.

The selections include different genre, such as fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Fiction can be described as, "Narrative writing drawn from the imagination of the author rather than from history or fact" (Holman and Harmon, 1986, p. 202). Nonfiction can be described as writing from history or fact. An example of nonfiction is an autobiographical piece, such as ***The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano***. Poetry might be defined as, "A term applied to the many forms in which human beings have given rhythmic expression to their most imaginative and intense perceptions of the world, themselves, and the relation of the two" (Holman and Harmon, 1986, p. 384). In this chapter, I will present a synopsis of each fiction and non-fiction piece, and the poems will be presented in their entirety. Then, I will draw conclusions from the projected structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests (See Diagrams 1 – 9) and their potential connections to the selected literary texts.

The next section will addresses exploratory subquestion 4, **"What are the connections between the structural themes inherent in the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences and teaching literature in ESOL?"** In order to draw conclusions based on the students' transcultural experiences, I will use the Literature and Language (Bernstein, 1994) and A Writer's Workbook (Smoke, 1996) textbooks to make connections between the results of the analysis and the selected literary works. These textbooks are appropriate to the purpose of the study because they include an array of multicultural selections, so I can make connections between the thematic analysis and the diverse voices represented in the selections. Multicultural textbooks incorporate readings that mirror the language of diversity, the pluralistic voices of authors and / or characters from a variety of cultural backgrounds. In this sense, these pluralistic voices, which have been traditionally silenced in the English / American literature canon, can potentially serve as touchstones for NNS students' transcultural experiences. The Cuban NNS students' experiences represent the diverse transcultural experiences, of a small group of students, which can potentially serve as bridge to multicultural literature. As Rosenblatt argues reading is a transaction between the reader and the text, and it is in this transaction, like the NNS students' transcultural experiences, that meaning emerges: ". . .the two-way, reciprocal relation explains why meaning is not 'in' the text or 'in' the reader. Both reader and text are essential to the transactional process of making meaning" (p. 27).

Furthermore, these anthologies have practical pedagogical implications for exploring a literature bridge between ESOL and mainstream English because they are the textbooks that are used in the adopted by the county and community college. In the case of Literature and Language, it will be used at the senior high level in English / language arts classes, so many NNS students from MDCPS entering community college will have been exposed to the American multicultural selections in the Literature and Language textbook.

## 5.3 Selected Literary Works: Building the Bridge Towards English

In this section I present the literary pieces selected for the study. The focus of the analysis will not concentrate on the authors' biographies, but on the literary work as a multicultural vision of its own. First, I will present synopses of the literary works. Then, I will explore the potential connections between the Cuban NNS students' transcultural experiences and the selected literary works. When I first perused the Table of Contents of Literature and Language and A Writer's Workbook I was impressed by the variety of cultural backgrounds that they covered. In Literature and Language, Unit One is divided into two Chapters: Unit One is titled "America's Family Tree," and is divided into two chapters–Chapter One: "The First Americans" and Chapter Two: "The Next Wave." Chapter One incorporates literature that explores the Native-American and Spanish experiences in America. Chapter Two includes literary selections that explore the African and English heritage of the United States. In A Writer's Workbook, the editor includes a variety of cultural topics and authors covering countries such as Haiti, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Japan, Iran, China, and Russia. In addition, many of the essays presented in the textbook introduce issues related to students' experiences learning a new language as well as cultural differences among the U.S. and other countries.

### A Reading of "Song of the Sky Loom"

From Literature and Language Unit One, Chapter One, I will analyze the following Native-American poem "Song of the Sky Loom," by Tewa Indian:

> O our Mother the Earth, O our Father the Sky,
> Your children are we, and with tired backs

We bring you the gifts you love.
Then weave for us a garment of brightness;
May the warp be the white light of morning,
May the weft be the red light of evening,
May the fringes be the falling rain,
May the border be the standing rainbow.
Thus weave for us a garment of brightness,
That we may walk fittingly where birds sing,
That we may walk fittingly where grass is green,
O our Mother the Earth, O our Father the Sky. (p. 31)

The poem includes an array of nature references, which represent the close relationship between Native-American culture and nature: Earth, sky, morning, evening, rain, rainbow, birds, and grass. Each of these nature references is expanded by the author to express a metaphor for nature or a condition of nature: Mother the Earth, Father the Sky, white light of morning, red light of evening, falling rain, standing rainbow, where birds sing, and where grass is green. The speaker offers the Earth and the Sky "the gifts they love," which could represent a song, dance, or other ceremonial symbols used by the early Tewa Indians of the Southwest United States. The author employs the use of extended metaphor to express what the speaker asks form the Earth and the Sky in return. The speaker says, "Then weave for us a garment of brightness," and develops the metaphor of a garment to represent different aspects of nature, which constitute a happy life.

### **Connections between students' transcultural interests and "Song of the Sky Loom"**

The poem "Song of the Sky Loom," invites potential points of interest to connect the transcultural experiences of the Cuban NNS students. These points of interest could be developed within an ESOL class or a regular mainstream English / language arts class, using the Language and Literature textbook. One of the projected structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests is that the students demonstrate an interest in illustrating a Cuban landscape. This poem uses the sky loom as a metaphor for identifying significant aspects of nature in early Native-American reality. Therefore, in my ESOL class, I could design a pre-reading activity, where I could guide student discussions about significant nature scenes from Cuba's landscape. I could pose the question, "How would you describe what Cuba looks like to someone who has never visited the island?" Subsequently, the students could describe the physical beauty of the Cuban landscape and its significance to the students' memories of living in Cuba. The students could even generate these pre-reading ideas in groups, where students from different cultures could contribute their own nature images. During the reading of "Song of the Sky Loom," as a class, we could make connections to the Native-American imagery by using the students' nature images of their native countries as a bridge to better understand the Native-American poem in English.

There are two other projected structural meanings related to the Cuban NNS students' interests that might be implemented in the classroom to make connections between their experiences and the literature. They are to ask students to name important landmarks, both man-made and/or natural, and ask students to compare / contrast places where they spent their most memorable times in Cuba. These projected structural meanings, gathered from the thematic analysis of the data, could potentially be used to develop pre / post-reading activities in the ESOL classroom.

## A Reading of "What is an American?"

In "What is an American?," Crevecoeur introduces the question about American identity. The question, "What is an American?" (p. 67) is appropriate for tapping into the interests of Cuban NNS students as they develop their own transcultural identity. Crevecoeur lays out a framework that needs to be questioned, since he focuses his definition of "American" on the European or descendants of European immigrants in the mid to late 18th Century. He does not address the African heritage of North America as a product of the infamous Middle Passage. However, Chapter One includes an excerpt from Equiano's autobiography that addresses the African-American heritage. Within the European tradition, Crevecoeur does introduce ideas of America as a "melting pot" from different nations. He emphasizes the concept of "transformation" for immigrants who coming to America leave behind the old and embrace the new: "He is an American who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds" (p. 67). Furthermore, Crevecoeur alludes to a sense of democracy as an integral part of American identity: "The American is a new man, who acts upon, new principles" (p. 68). It is clear that Crevecoeur's definition of "What is an American?" has been revisited and revised by many Americans throughout the ages and was in need of including African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, Jewish-Americans, and Americans from other races and national backgrounds. Crevecoeur does, however, echo the seeds of democracy planted by the Forefathers of the U.S. during his era, so his essay is significant to the interests of ESOL students that have come to the U.S. with their families in search of democracy.

## Connections between students' transcultural interests and "What is an American?"

Jean de Crevecoeur's essay "What is An American?" incorporates several key ideas that I could potentially use in class for further connecting students' transcultural experiences to using literature as the bridge to English. A projected structural meaning of the Cuban NNS students' interests that could be used to connect students to the literature is to have the students analyze their ideas of going to school and making friends in the U.S., while they still lived in Cuba, and making friends in the U.S. today. I would implement this type of comparative analysis as part of a pre-reading journal, so that later, as a class, we could examine the data collected from students' observations. This type of pre-reading activity could also be extended to a reading journal. Before reading Crevecoeur's essay, the students could work in collaborative groups to brainstorm definitions of being American. The students could draw definitions from their own observations of American people and culture. Their observations might reflect interaction among friends in the U.S., where they emphasize the differences and similarities of their friends' characteristics. Subsequently, they can compare / contrast their definitions to Crevecoeur's definition of "What is an American?"

Other projected structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests that could potentially serve as a bridge to Crevecoeur's essay are the following: Invite the students to examine the changes in Cuban politics since its independence from Spain. Ask the students to list some of the famous Cuban leaders before and after the Communist Revolution and analyze their impact on Cuba; Prompt students to describe a day in a Cuban school; Ask students to compare / contrast the kinds of relationships they had with their friends in Cuba versus in the U.S.; Invite students to compare and/or contrast freedom of expression.

## A Reading of *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*

Olaudah Equiano's autobiography represents a voice that would haunt Crevecoeur's definition of an American for centuries to come. As Americans, we have yet to see the dawn of an era where our society has existed longer without slavery than with slavery, for slavery constitutes over 200 years of our heritage. The excerpt in Literature and Language is entitled "From Africa to America," and it portrays Equiano's first person narrative of the horrors of the Middle Passage and how he and his people were treated as captured slaves:

> I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life, so that with the loathsomeness of the stench and crying, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat. I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me (p. 72).

Equiano's accounts bring the reader up close to the repulsive violations of human rights committed by the Europeans and North Americans involved in the slave trade. Equiano clearly describes the revolting manner in which the Africans were enslaved, only to be bought, sold, and separated from family and friends. Equiano's narrative portrays the Africans as people whose human spirit witnessed the torturous crimes against humanity committed by the European and North American world:

> On a signal given (as the beat of a drum), the buyers rush at once into the yard where the slaves are confined and make choice of that parcel (group) they like best. The noise and clamor with which this is attended and the eagerness visible in the countenances of the buyers serve not a little to increase the apprehension of terrified Africans. In this manner, without

> scruple, are relations and friends separated, most of them never to see each other again. (p. 74)

### Connections between the students' transcultural interests and *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*

Equiano's autobiography offers significant points in the literature that I can use to connect ESOL students to their transcultural experiences. One of the central issues in Equiano's narrative is freedom. A projected structural meaning of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented in their transcultural experiences is to have the students discuss and define the word "freedom." A pre-reading question that I can use in attempting to understand Equiano's reality is to ask students to define the word "freedom." Additionally, I might ask students why their families came to the U.S. Students could work in pairs, and define what freedom means to each of them. Then, with their partners, focus the definition, so they can present their definition of freedom to the class. Freedom is an abstract concept, and this kind of activity will allow synthesis between both partners in articulating a well-developed definition.

There are several other structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented by their transcultural experiences which could potentially be used to better connect these students to Equiano's autobiography: First, ask students to describe their favorite childhood memories in Cuba; Invite students to describe how they pictured the U.S. before they arrived; Ask students to compare / contrast their ideas of the U.S. before they arrived and their ideas after they arrived; Guide students in examining some of the negative aspects of attending school in the U.S; Prompt students to contrast the quality time they spent with their family while in Cuba and while in the U.S.

## A Reading of "I, Too"

From Unit Five, Chapter One, I analyzed the following poem "I, Too" by Langston Hughes:

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America (p. 487)

In Hughes' poem the speaker introduces a central theme in the first stanza, "I, too, sing America." With this declaration, the speaker sets the tone for a powerful statement about national and cultural identity that speaks of inclusion. This appears to be a reference to the song, "America," and possibly the participation of diverse voices in the national discourse. This declaration alone is so powerful that Hughes expresses it as a complete stanza. In the second stanza, the speaker identifies himself as "the darker brother," who is sent to eat in the kitchen, "when company comes. . ." Company is possibly an allusion to the power of mainstream discourse as it defers the participation of minority discourse. Hughes' develops the metaphor for eating at the dinner table as a symbol for all voices someday participating in the national discourse. The irony is that the speaker says, "But I laugh, / And eat well, / And grow strong." Then, I ask myself, is this perhaps a reference to the strength demonstrated by many African-Americans during the repressive era of slavery? The poem is written in the present tense form that invites a vision of the future for African-Americans. The speaker points to a post-repression era that claims his place at the table, or in a metaphorical sense, claims a voice in American discourse, "Tomorrow, / I'll be at the table / When company comes." This new era is supported by the idea that No one will dare say to the speaker, "Eat in the kitchen, / Then." On the contrary, the speaker portrays a day when majority culture will see how beautiful he is, "And be ashamed. . .," thus, echoing "I, too, am America." In this last line, I hear the speaker's identification with a national / cultural consciousness that claims a place for his voice.

## Connections between students' transcultural interests and "I, Too"

A poem that incorporates many of the same issues as Equiano's autobiography is Langston Hughes' poem "I, Too." One of the projected structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented in their transcultural experiences which can serve as a connection between the students and Hughes' poem is for to guide students in examining their ideas of the U.S. while they still lived in Cuba. Students could design a visual presentation of their ideas of the U.S. before they arrived. The project could incorporate visual and narrative descriptions of the ways they pictured the U.S. before actually coming here. Presenting these ideas to the class can serve as a touchstone to Langston Hughes' poem. The students could give oral presentations expressing their perspectives of the U.S., before and after arriving. Then, they could make connections to ways the speaker of the poem might possibly view America, illuminating the interrelation between their transcultural experiences and their interpretation of Langston Hughes' poem.

Here are some other structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented by their transcultural experiences: Prompt students to explain the ways they felt when they were in Cuba, Ask students to differentiate between the way people talked about the U.S. in Cuba and their impressions of the U.S. today; Ask students to elaborate on whether or not they would recommend their friends in Cuba to come to the U.S; How would they describe life in the U.S. to their friends; Invite students to define the word "freedom." What does freedom mean to them?

### A Reading of "Martinez' Treasure"

From Unit Seven, Chapter Three, which is entitled "Unexpected Gifts" I analyzed the parable "Martinez' Treasure" by Manuela Williams Crosno. The parable is the story of a very poor Mexican-American couple, Juan and Rosa, who lived near the mountains. Juan had a burro, that he called Jose. They lived in a small home which Juan called his "casa." They raised beans, corn, and chili peppers, and they owned a few items of clothing, which were used gifts from their relatives. Juan and Rosa worked from morning until night in order to provide for their food and poor existence. Juan sold wood in the village day after day, and Rosa milked goats and drove them out to eat grass. One day, Juan brought home a chest 18 inches deep, 18 inches wide, and 2 feet long, which he had tied across Jose's back to carry home. Juan found the chest in the dry bed of a river. Juan and Rosa tried to open the chest, but each night they tried, they discovered they could not open it. However, as the days passed, they became more and more convinced that they were now rich because the chest had to be loaded with treasures: "Remembering stories of hidden gold, they were certain the chest was filled with old Spanish coins." Despite promises of riches, they continued to work hard because each day ". . .habit called them to their usual tasks." Now they were happy, for they were convinced they were rich. Eventually, they decided not to concern themselves with opening the chest, for it was sufficient to know they were rich. Instead, they decided to hide the treasure chest in their house and continue to live their lives happier than ever, now that they already knew they were, indeed, very wealthy people. After living happily for many years, Juan and Rosa passed away. It was after this that Pancho and Tomas, Juan's brothers, found the chest in Juan's house. The two brothers tried to open the chest, but they did not succeed; thus, convinced that they were now wealthy, they took it home to show Pancho's wife. They believed the chest was filled with gold. Pancho asked for the help of Dr. Gardea, the village doctor and a learned man. The chest had small letters carved into its metal-like material, but Juan and Rosa had not been able to read it. Now, Pancho lied to the doctor by saying that the chest was a family heirloom, and at one time he even knew what the letters said, but it had been so long that he had forgotten. He asked the good doctor for help in opening the chest and if he could read the letters on the chest. "Will you read for us what the letters say?" Tomas asked the doctor. Dr. Gardea asked the brothers, "Are you sure you want to open the chest?" In addition to a message, the letters gave the doctor instructions on how to open the chest. The doctor followed the instructions, "With a quick jerk, he tore aside one corner of the ornament, and there unfastened the clasp that would allow the top to open." The doctor was a discreet man who chose not to open the chest, but simply left the house before the brothers opened the mysterious chest:

> Pancho closed the door and locked it carefully after the doctor had gone. Now the three people could not hide their excitement! Soon they would be rich! Already they could feel the gold pieces sliding through their fingers! They quickly opened the lid. (p. 996).

The brothers discovered that the chest was filled with wooden figures of saints and a cross made of granite rock. Soon they realized there had been no treasure in the chest. They all began arguing and felt miserable once they realized there were no riches to be found. One day, Pancho ran into the doctor and demanded of him, "You will tell me what was carved into the arca vieja (chest)?" The doctor responded, "Whoever possesses this chest will be happy so long as he opens it not!" (p. 996).

### Connections between students' transcultural interests and "Martinez' Treasure"

In the parable "Martinez' Treasure," Manuela Williams Crosno, one possible moral is that happiness is how each person perceives his or her own reality. In the story there are many valuable reference points that could connect to my students' interests. A projected structural meaning of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented in their transcultural experiences is to have the students explore the question, "What if you had never come to the U.S.?" How would you be picturing the U.S. if you were still in Cuba?" These questions are appropriate for the students to make connections to "Martinez' Treasure" because it gives students an opportunity to imagine how they would be and think of the U.S. if they had never come here. This situation is similar to Juan and Rosa's situation in the story, when they had to imagine what it would be like to have money, although they were not able to prove it because they never opened the chest.

Additionally, the students could empathize with Juan and Rosa's situation and ask themselves how they would react to the insecurity of not always knowing what the future holds for them in the U.S.

Other structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented in their transcultural experiences can be used to connect the students' to the parable: Ask the students to discuss a typical day of life in Cuba; Invite students to show the differences between life in Cuba and life in Miami; Ask students to explore some of the most important things they learned while attending school in Cuba; Discuss with students what they predict for their future after community college or high school; Ask students to compare / contrast the kinds of relationships they had with their family in Cuba and the U.S.; Invite students to evaluate changes in their relationships with their family since they have been in the U.S.

### A Reading of "Back, but Not Home"

In the autobiographical essay "Back, but Not Home" Maria Muñiz, who left Cuba with her family at the age of 5, asks herself the question, "Would I ever go back?" After thinking about it long and hard, she realizes that she would like to visit Cuba someday. In the narrative, Maria describes her childhood memories of growing up in a middle class neighborhood in Brooklyn. There were not many Cuban families in her neighborhood, so she did not grow up around Cuban friends. Maria describes her feelings as, "Outside American, inside Cuban" (p. 282). When Maria left Cuba with her family, she left behind her grandparents, aunts, uncles, and several cousins. Sometimes Maria would visit family members in Miami, but she felt strange in Miami because it was such a different world.

Maria's family in Miami would accuse her of being too "Americanized." Maria discusses that her struggle of whether to return or not to Cuba was both personal and political, in part, watching the separation of family members when they arrived from Cuba:

> I recently had a conversation with a man who generally sympathizes with the Castro regime. We talked of Cuban politics and although the discussion was very casual, I felt an old anger welling inside. After 16 years of living an "American" life, I am still unable to view the revolution with detachment or objectivity. I cannot interpret its results in social, political or economic terms. Too many memories stand in my way. (p. 282)

Maria describes some of her childhood memories. She recall how, as a little girl, she would wake up crying because she had dreamed of her aunts and grandmothers and remembered how much she missed them: "I remembered my mother's trembling voice and the sad look on her face whenever she spoke to her mother over the phone" (p. 282). Maria retells the challenges she faced in school when the teachers realized she had difficulty in English. She had been in this country only a few months and although she understood a good deal of what was said to her in school, she could not express herself very well, so she cried.

As an adult, she has learned to deal with her childhood memories, so they don't hurt as much. However, Maria believes that there is still something missing in her life. She feels she needs to complete the circle by returning to Cuba. She is not ready to take the position of forgetting a past filled with memories of sadness and separation, but she is beginning to care less and less about politics. Maria claims she is beginning to remember and care more about the child who left her grandmother behind. She feels she must return to Cuba one day because she wants to know that little girl better:

> When I try to review my life during the past 16 years, I almost feel as if I've walked into a theater right in the middle of a movie. And I'm afraid I

> won't fully understand or enjoy the rest of the movie unless I can see and understand the beginning. And for me, the beginning is Cuba. I don't want to go "home" again; the life and home we all left behind are long gone. My home is here and I am happy. (p. 283)

Maria ends the essay by explaining that, like all immigrants, her family and she have had to build a new life from nothing in the U.S., but she believes that this struggle has made them strong and. In this sense, most of her memories are good ones. Someday, however, she plans to complete the circle: "I want to return because the journey back will also mean a journey within. Only then will I see the missing piece" (p. 283).

### Connections between students' transcultural interests and "Back, but Not Home"

In the autobiographical essay "Back, but Not Home" Maria Martinez struggles with similar issues raised by the study's participants. The central question, whether or not to return to Cuba, is one shared by all of the participants, including the Cuban-American NESS students. From this question, I could have the students in an ESOL class explore the connections between their autobiographies and Maria's experience. There are many reference points in the essay that could serve to potentially connect to the students' interests. A projected structural meaning of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented in their transcultural experiences is to have the students explore why they and their families came to the U.S. Students might want to share the information with the class, so that the whole class can analyze different reasons why ESOL students have left their native countries. In some cases, it might be interesting to differentiate between students who, like their parents, wanted to come to the U.S. and others who wanted to stay in their native countries, but felt they had to leave because of their parents. Exploring the reasons why they came to the U.S. will invite the students, to question if they would ever go back to their native countries. From this activity, I would guide students to connect their thoughts to whether they would ever return, or not, to their native countries. Maria's reasons for wanting to return to Cuba. If some students believe their situation is different than Maria's, they might want to compare their reality to her reality, and then put themselves in Maria's place: "What would they do if they were Maria?"

Other structural meanings of the Cuban NNS students' interests as represented in their transcultural experiences can be used to connect the students' to the essay: Invite students to show the differences between life in Cuba and life in Miami; Ask students to compare / contrast the kinds of relationships they had with their family in Cuba and the U.S.; Examine the changes in Cuban politics since its independence from Spain. Who have been some of the famous Cuban leaders before and after the Communist Revolution? Analyze their impact on Cuba. Differentiate between the way people talked about the U.S. in Cuba and your impressions of the U.S. today. What if you could choose to have the best of both worlds, Cuba and the U.S.? Describe what type of country it would be.

## 5.4 Questions for Further Study

This study cannot be generalized to Cuban NNS Students in secondary schools or community colleges as a whole, but it is focused on the unique transcultural experiences of these four NNS students as well as the experiences of the two Cuban-American NESS students. The focused results of the study raise questions of the possibilities for qualitative research, which administrators and teachers could use in future studies to better understand the academic needs of Cuban NNS students. A critical dimension of qualitative research is that it provides the researcher with meaningful opportunities to generate questions beyond the stages of thematic-analysis, and even, the conclusion of the study. For one, I was able to generate questions on the nature of students' transcultural experiences from the students' interests presented in Chapter Four. This is due to the recursive nature of qualitative research. Furthermore, this study sets the stage for a broad range of qualitative research that can potentially be implemented with NNS students of diverse cultural backgrounds. Finally, this study opens the door for research that attempts to better understand both the unique and universal essential structures that account for the NNS students' transcultural experiences. From a pedagogical perspective, this study also suggests further research in the area of literature in the ESOL classroom and its connection to the transcultural experiences of NNS students.

### 5.5 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the research findings of this study. High school and college teachers, administrators, and curriculum specialists should use more qualitative research to investigate the transcultural experiences of ESOL students from different cultures, emphasizing the cultural needs of each school and/or college. Investigating the transcultural experiences of NNS students might lead educators to a better understanding of NNS students' needs. Furthermore, qualitative research on ESOL students could lead to significant connections between NNS students' interests and developing academic skills in English. ESOL curriculum specialists in high schools and community colleges could benefit from a qualitative model for better understanding transcultural experiences because they could use it in reevaluating and redesigning ESOL curriculum at the county and state levels. In MDCPS, for example, curriculum writers could use qualitative research on NNS students' transcultural experiences to re-write the

MDCPS ESOL CBC. Subsequently, the findings of qualitative research on NNS students' transcultural experiences could be used to help select textbooks for individual classrooms or media-centers at the high schools and colleges. In addition, researchers interested in using the model presented in this study may do so as a touchstone for taking the students' projected interests and use them to help students select texts and then analyze students' responses to the texts. Further qualitative research in the area of NNS students' transcultural experiences could also help develop teacher preparation at the university level as well as developing teacher in-service training. On personal and professional levels, the richness of qualitative research has provided me with a foundation to pursue many of the questions and recommendations raised by this study in my own classroom, so I can learn about my students, while I continue to grow as a teacher.

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**(APPENDIX A - Consent Form in English)**

## INFORMED CONSENT

### *TRANSCULTURAL EXPERIENCES: A LITERATURE BRIDGE TO ENGLISH FOR ESOL STUDENTS FROM CUBA*

I freely and voluntarily consent to be a participant in the research project entitled Transcultural Experiences: A Bridge Towards English Through Literature for ESOL Students from Cuba to be conducted at Florida International University during the 1997-1998 school year, with Jose Macia as Principal Investigator. I have been told that this experiment will require two interview sessions, lasting approximately 90 minutes each.

I understand that the purpose of this research is to study ESOL students' transcultural experiences in order to make connections between transcultural experiences and teaching literature in the ESOL classroom.

I understand that the research procedures will be as follows:

1) I will be asked a series of interview questions related to my experiences in Cuba.
2) I will be asked a series of interview questions related to my experiences in the U.S.
3) The interviews will be recorded two ways--by a court-reporting student (audiocassette recorder) and a computerized aided transcription machine (CAT System).

I understand that there are no risks or benefits involved in my participation in this experiment. I have been told that my responses will be anonymous and will be identified in the dissertation by a pseudonym. I have been told that there will be approximately six respondents in the total sample for this study.

I understand that I may withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in this research project at any time without any negative consequences. I have been given the right to ask questions concerning the procedure, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that if I desire further information about this research I should contact Mr. Jose Macia, at (305) 362-0676 or Dr. Kingsley Banya at (305) 348-1921. I have been offered a copy of this informed consent form.

I have read, and I understand the consent form.

________________________________ ________________

Participant's signature Date

I, ________________________________, am the parent or legal guardian of
(name of parent or legal guardian of participant)

______________________________. I have read, and I understand the consent
(participant's name)

form, and authorize for my son/daughter to participate in the study.

________________________________ ________________

Signature of parent or legal guardian of participant Date

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the participant has agreed to participate, and have offered him/her a copy of this informed consent form.

________________________________ ________________

Principal investigator's signature Date

**(APPENDIX B – Consent Form in Spanish)**

## AUTORIZACION

### *EXPERIENCIAS TRANSCULTURALES: UN PUENTE LITERARIO HACIA EL INGLES PARA ESTUDIANTES DE INGLES COMO SEGUNDA LENGUA*

Libre y voluntariamente accedo a participar en el proyecto investigativo titulado "Experiencias transculturales: un puente hacia el ingles a traves de la literatura en estudiantes de ESOL." Dicha investigacion se conducira en la Universidad Internacional de la Florida por Jose Macia, investigador, durante el ano escolar 1997-1998. He sido informado que esta investigacion requerira de dos entrevistas de noventa minutos de duracion cada una.

Entiendo que el objetivo de este estudio es indagar sobre las experiencias transculturales de los estudiantes de ingles como segunda lengua (ESOL), para establecer conexiones entre dichas experiencias y la ensenanza de la literatura a los estudiantes de ESOL.

Entiendo que los procedimientos a seguir seran los siguientes:

1. El investigador me hara una serie de preguntas sobre mi experiencias en Cuba.
2. El investigador me hara una serie de preguntas sobre mi experiencias en los Estados Unidos.
3. Las entrevistas se recogeran de dos maneras: a traves de una grabacion utilizando un grabador-reproductor y por ruas de una transcripcion computarizada (Sistema CAT).

Entiendo que no enfrento riesgos ni beneficios relacionados con mi participacion en este proyecto. He sido informado que mis respuestas se mantendran anonimas y se identificaran en la disertacion con un seudonimo. He sido informado que habran cuatro participantes en el presente estudio.

Entiendo que puedo retirar mi autorizacion y dejar de participar en esta investigacion en cualquier momento que entienda pertinente sin que esto revierta en ningun tipo de consequencia negativa. Tengo el derecho de realizar preguntas sobre el procedimiento a seguir en esta investigacion y de recibir respuestas satisfactorias.

Entiendo que si deseo informacion adicional sobre esta investigacion puedo llamar al Sr. Jose Macia (305-362-0676) o al Dr. Kinglsey Banya (305-348-1921). Se me ha ofrecido una copia de esta autorizacion.

He leido y entendido este formulario.

______________________________________ ____________________

Firma del participante Fecha

Yo ________________________________________, soy el padre o guardian legal de
(padre o guardian legal del participante)

____________________________________. He leido y entendido el formulario de
(participante)

autorizacion. Otorgo mi consentimiento para que mi hijo(a) participe en la investigacion aqui expuesta.

__________________________________________ ____________________

Firma del padre o guardian legal Fecha

He explicado en detalles el procedimiento en el cual estara involucrado el participante. Le he ofrecido una copia de esta autorizacion.

______________________________________ ____________________

Firma del investigador Fecha

**(APPENDIX C – Interview Protocol A)**

## Interview Questions

The following questions will be asked in two sessions for a total of ten interviews that will compose the primary data set for this study. Interview questions will be edited appropriately for Cuban-born or Cuban American born students.

### Interview Protocol A

1. What city, province and town of Cuba (or the U.S.) were you born in?
2. Describe the (city) town you were born in?
3. How long did you live (have you lived) there?
4. Did you live in any other towns, provinces, or countries before coming to the U.S.?
5. How old are you?
6. When did you leave Cuba?
7. How did you get from Cuba to the U.S.?
8. With whom did you come to the U.S.?
9. Did you already have family in the U.S.? Who?
10. Do you have family in Cuba? Who?
11. Describe your impressions of Cuba.
12. Describe some of your first thoughts when you arrived in Miami.
13. Is Miami the only place you've lived in the U.S.?
14. Describe your impressions of Miami.
15. How did you picture the U.S. before you came here?

16. Is Barbara Goleman (or Miami Dade) the only school you have attended in the U.S.?

17. Describe a day at Barbara Goleman (or Miami Dade).

18. Describe what you like and don't like about school in Miami.

19. What high school did you attend in Cuba?

20. Describe a day at school in Cuba.

21. Describe what you liked and didn't like about school in Cuba.

22. Describe your feelings around the other students in Cuba.

23. Describe your feelings around the other students at Barbara Goleman (or Miami-Dade).

24. What is your favorite subject here at Barbara Goleman (or Miami-Dade)? Why?

25. What was your favorite subject in Cuba? Why?

26. What was your least favorite subject in Cuba? Why?

27. What is your least favorite subject here in the U.S.? Why?

28. What did you like doing in your spare time in Cuba?

29. What do you like doing in your spare time here in Miami?

30. Describe your favorite memory of an experience in Cuba.

31. Describe your favorite memory of an experience here in the U.S.

32. Describe a weekend in Cuba.

33. Describe a weekend in the U.S.

34. Did you have many friends in Cuba?

35. Describe one of your best friends in Cuba.

36. Do you have many friends in the U.S.?

37. Describe one of your best friends in the U.S.

38. While you were still in Cuba, what were your plans for the future?

39. Have your plans changed now that you are in the U.S.?

40. What did you like to read in Cuba?

41. What do you like to read in the U.S.?

## (APPENDIX D – Interview Protocol B)

### Interview Protocol B

42. What kinds of movies did you like to watch in Cuba?

43. What kinds of movies did you like to watch in the U.S.?

44. Describe the music you listened to in Cuba.

45. Describe the music you listened to in the U.S.

46. What sports did you play in Cuba?

47. What sports do you play in the U.S.?

48. Did you work in Cuba? Describe your job.

49. Do you work here in the U.S.? Describe your job.

50. Describe an afternoon after school in Cuba.

51. Describe an afternoon after school in the U.S.

52. Describe your favorite place in Cuba.

53. Describe your favorite place in the U.S.

54. Describe your impressions of the beach in Cuba.

55. Describe your impressions of the beach in the U.S.

56. What are some of the foods you ate in Cuba? Describe your eating habits in Cuba, and some of the meals you ate on a typical day.

57. What are some of the foods you eat in Miami? Describe your eating habits now, and some of the meals you eat on a typical day.

58. Describe your relationships and feelings towards teachers, police officers, or other authority figures in Cuba.

59. Describe your relationships and feelings towards teachers, police officers, or other authority figures here in Miami.

60. In the U.S., many people promote the idea of students' rights to freely express their ideas. What do you think about this?

61. Do you feel that in Cuba students had the same rights to express their ideas freely?

62. In the U.S., some students and teachers publicly question and criticize the government, including the President. What do you think about this?

63. Do you feel that in Cuba students and teachers have the right to publicly question and criticize the government, including the President?

64. Describe a party or social event, where friends and family gather, in Cuba.

65. Describe a party or social event, where friends and family gather, here in Miami.

66. Describe being a teenager in Cuba.

67. Describe being a teenager in Miami.

68. How do teenagers feel about religion in Cuba?

69. What are your impressions of how teenagers feel about religion in Miami?

70. How do teenagers feel about sex in Cuba?

71. How do teenagers feel about sex in Miami?

72. Describe a fun day in Cuba.

73. Describe a fun day in Miami.

74. Describe your vision of Cuba in the future.

75. Describe your vision of Miami in the future.

76. Would you like to spend the rest of your life in the U.S or would you like to go back to Cuba someday?

77. What is your impression of a Cuban-American student at Barbara Goleman (or Miami Dade), someone born here, whose parents are Cuban?

78. Do you have friends who were born here, but of Cuban descent?

79. Do you have friends in Miami who were born in Cuba, but recently came to the U.S.?

80. Do you think there is a cultural difference between Cubans in Cuba and Cubans in the U.S.? Describe the difference.

81. If you had three wishes, what would you wish for?

82. What is your idea of a great life?

# VITA

## JOSE J. MACIA

| | |
|---|---|
| | Born, Camaguey, Cuba |
| 1992 | B.A., English<br>Barry University<br>Miami Shores, Florida |
| 1993 | ESOL Teacher<br>Ponce de Leon Middle School<br>Coral Gables, Florida |
| 1993-1994 | ESOL Teacher<br>Coral Gables Senior High School<br>Coral Gables, Florida |
| 1994 | M.A., English<br>Barry University<br>Miami Shores, Florida |
| 1994 – 1998 | ESOL Department Chair / Teacher<br>Miami Coral Park Senior High School<br>Miami, Florida |
| 1997 - Present | ESL Adjunct Instructor<br>Miami-Dade Community College, Wolfson |
| 1998 – 1999 | ESOL Department Chair / Teacher<br>Barbara Goleman Senior High School<br>Miami, Florida |
| 1999 - Present | ESL Professor<br>Broward Community College, North<br>Coconut Creek, Florida |
| 1999 | Ed.D., Higher Education<br>Florida International University<br>Miami, Florida |